Lord Byron

BY

JOHN NICHOL

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BYRON

BY

JOHN NICHOL

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EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY.

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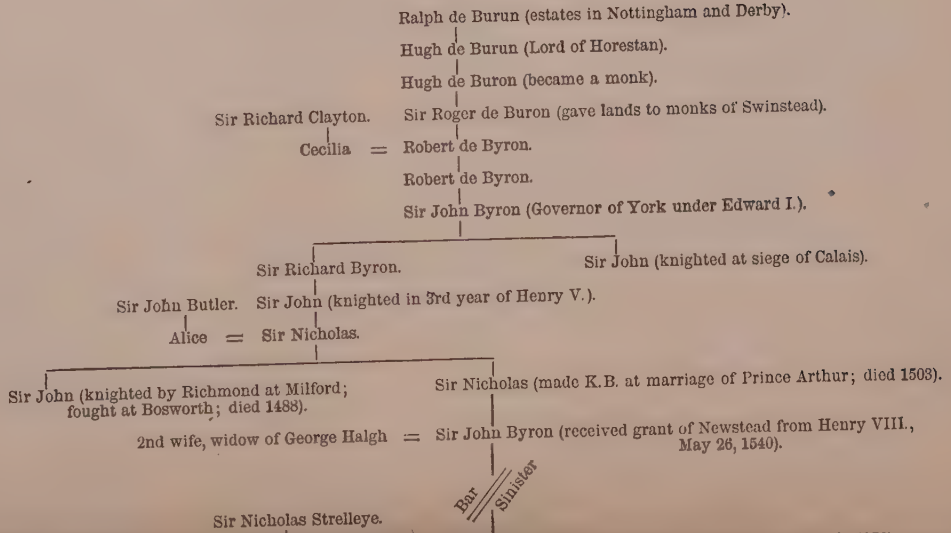
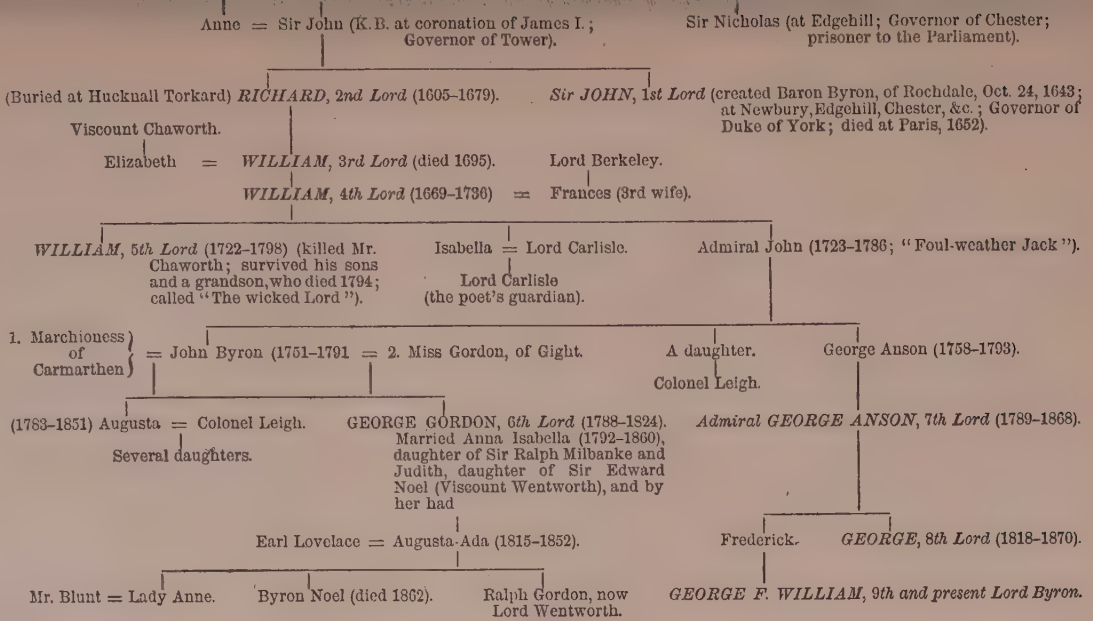
GENEALOGY OF THE BYRON FAMILY.

THE BYRON FAMILY, FROM THE CONQUEST.


Ralph de Burun (estates in Nottingham and Derby).
Hugh de Burun (Lord of Horestan).
Hugh de Buron (became a monk).
Sir Richard Clayton.
Sir Roger de Buron (gave lands to monks of Swinstead).
Cecilia = Robert de Byron.
Robert de Byron.
Sir John Byron (Governor of York under Edward I.).
Sir Richard Byron.
Sir John (knighted at siege of Calais).
Sir John Butler.
Sir John (knighted in 3rd year of Henry V.).
Alice = Sir Nicholas.
Sir John (knighted by Richmond at Milford; fought at Bosworth; died 1488).
Sir Nicholas (made K.B. at marriage of Prince Arthur; died 1503).
2nd wife, widow of George Halgh = Sir John Byron (received grant of Newstead from Henry VIII., May 26, 1540).
Bar
Sinister
Sir Nicholas Strelleye.


Anne = Sir John (K.B. at coronation of James I.; Governor of Tower).
Sir Nicholas (at Edgehill; Governor of Chester; prisoner to the Parliament).
(Buried at Hucknall Torkard) RICHARD, 2nd Lord (1605–1679).
Sir JOHN, 1st Lord (created Baron Byron, of Rochdale, Oct. 24, 1643; at Newbury, Edgehill, Chester, &c.; Governor of Duke of York; died at Paris, 1652).
Viscount Chaworth.
Elizabeth = WILLIAM, 3rd Lord (died 1695).
Lord Berkeley.
WILLIAM, 4th Lord (1669–1736) = Frances (3rd wife).
WILLIAM, 5th Lord (1722–1798) (killed Mr. Chaworth; survived his sons and a grandson, who died 1794; called "The wicked Lord").
Isabella = Lord Carlisle.
Lord Carlisle (the poet's guardian).
Admiral John (1723–1786; "Foul-weather Jack").
1. Marchioness of Carmarthen = John Byron (1751–1791 = 2. Miss Gordon, of Gight.
A daughter.
Colonel Leigh.
George Anson (1758–1793).
(1783–1851) Augusta = Colonel Leigh.
Several daughters.
GEORGE GORDON, 6th Lord (1788–1824). Married Anna Isabella (1792–1860), daughter of Sir Ralph Milbanke and Judith, daughter of Sir Edward Noel (Viscount Wentworth), and by her had
Admiral GEORGE ANSON, 7th Lord (1789–1868).
Earl Lovelace = Augusta-Ada (1815–1852).
Frederick.
GEORGE, 8th Lord (1818–1870).
Mr. Blunt = Lady Anne.
Byron Noel (died 1862).
Ralph Gordon, now Lord Wentworth.
GEORGE F. WILLIAM, 9th and present Lord Byron.

BYRON.

CHAPTER I.

ANCESTRY AND FAMILY.

Byron's life was passed under the fierce light that beats upon an intellectual throne. He succeeded in making himself—what he wished to be—the most notorious personality in the world of letters of our century. Almost every one who came in contact with him has left on record various impressions of intimacy or interview. Those whom he excluded or patronized, maligned; those to whom he was genial, loved him. Mr. Southey, in all sincerity, regarded him as the principle of Evil incarnate; an American writer of tracts in the form of stories is of the same opinion: to the Countess Guiccioli he is an archangel. Mr. Carlyle considers him to have been a mere "sulky dandy." Goethe ranks him as the first English poet after Shakespeare, and is followed by the leading critics of France, Italy, and Spain. All concur in the admission that Byron was as proud of his race as of his verse, and that in unexampled measure the good and evil of his nature were inherited and inborn. His genealogy is, therefore, a matter of no idle antiquarianism.

There are legends of old Norse Buruns migrating from their home in Scandinavia, and settling, one branch in Normandy, another in Livonia. To the latter belonged a shadowy Marshal de Burun, famous for the almost absolute power he wielded in the then infant realm of Russia. Two members of the family came over with the Conqueror, and settled in England. Of Erneis de Burun, who had lands in York and Lincoln, we hear little more. Ralph, the poet's ancestor, is mentioned in Doomsday Book—our first authentic record—as having estates in Nottinghamshire and Derby. His son Hugh was lord of Horestan Castle in the latter county, and with his son of the same name, under King Stephen, presented the church of Ossington to the monks of Lenton. The latter Hugh joined their order; but the race was continued by his son Sir Roger, who gave lands to the monastery of Swinstead. This brings us to the reign of Henry II. (1155–1189), when Robert de Byron adopted the spelling of his name afterwards retained, and by his marriage with Cecilia, heir of Sir Richard Clayton, added to the family possessions an estate in Lancashire, where, till the time of Henry VIII., they fixed their seat. The poet, relying on old wood-carvings at Newstead, claims for some of his ancestors a part in the crusades, and mentions a name not apparently belonging to that age—

"Near Ascalon's towers, John of Horestan slumbers—"

a romance, like many of his, possibly founded on fact, but incapable of verification.

Two grandsons of Sir Robert have a more substantial fame, having served with distinction in the wars of Edward I. The elder of these was governor of the city of York. Some members of his family fought at Cressy, and one of

his sons, Sir John, was knighted by Edward III. at the siege of Calais. Descending through the other, Sir Richard, we come to another Sir John, knighted by Richmond, afterwards Henry VII., on his landing at Milford. He fought, with his kin, on the field of Bosworth, and dying without issue, left the estates to his brother, Sir Nicholas, knighted in 1502, at the marriage of Prince Arthur. The son of Sir Nicholas, known as "little Sir John of the great beard," appears to have been a favourite of Henry VIII., who made him Steward of Manchester and Lieutenant of Sherwood, and on the dissolution of the monasteries presented him with the Priory of Newstead, the rents of which were equivalent to about 4000*l.* of our money. Sir John, who stepped into the Abbey in 1540, married twice, and the premature appearance of a son by the second wife—widow of Sir George Halgh—brought the bar sinister of which so much has been made. No indication of this fact, however, appears in the family arms, and it is doubtful if the poet was aware of a reproach which in any case does not touch his descent. The "filius naturalis," John Byron of Clayton, inherited by deed of gift, and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1579. His descendants were prominent as staunch Royalists during the whole period of the Civil Wars. At Edgehill there were seven Byrons on the field.

> "On Marston, with Rupert 'gainst traitors contending,
> Four brothers enrich'd with their blood the bleak field."

Sir Nicholas, one of the seven, is extolled as "a person of great affability and dexterity, as well as martial knowledge, which gave great life to the designs of the well affected." He was taken prisoner by the Parliament while acting as governor of Chester. Under his nephew, Sir John, New-

stead is said to have been besieged and taken; but the knight escaped, in the words of the poet—never a Radical at heart—a "protecting genius,

> For nobler combats here reserved his life,
> To lead the band where godlike Falkland fell."

Clarendon, indeed, informs us, that on the morning before the battle, Falkland, "very cheerful, as always upon action, put himself into the first rank of the Lord Byron's regiment." This slightly antedates his title. The first battle of Newbury was fought on September, 1643. For his services there, and at a previous royal victory, over Waller in July, Sir John was, on October 24th of the same year, created Baron of Rochdale, and so became the first Peer of the family.

This first lord was succeeded by his brother Richard (1605–1679), famous in the war for his government and gallant defence of Newark. He rests in the vault that now contains the dust of the greatest of his race, in Hucknall Torkard Church, where his epitaph records the fact that the family lost all their present fortunes by their loyalty, adding, "yet it pleased God so to bless the humble endeavours of the said Richard, Lord Byron, that he repurchased part of their ancient inheritance, which he left to his posterity, with a laudable memory for his great piety and charity." His eldest son, William, the third lord (died 1695), is worth remembering on two accounts. He married Elizabeth, the daughter of Viscount Chaworth, and so wove the first link in a strange association of tragedy and romance: he was a patron of one of those poets who, approved by neither gods nor columns, are remembered by the accident of an accident, and was himself a poetaster capable of the couplet,—

"My whole ambition only does extend
To gain the name of Shipman's faithful friend"—

an ambition which, considering its moderate scope, may be granted to have attained its desire.

His successor, the fourth lord (1669–1736), gentleman of the bedchamber to Prince George of Denmark, himself living a quiet life, became, by his third wife, Frances, daughter of Lord Berkeley, the progenitor of a strange group of eccentric, adventurous, and passionate spirits. The eldest son, the fifth lord, and immediate predecessor in the peerage of the poet, was born in 1722, entered the naval service, left his ship, the "Victory," just before she was lost on the rocks of Alderney, and subsequently became master of the stag-hounds. In 1765, the year of the passing of the American Stamp Act, an event occurred which coloured the whole of his after-life, and is curiously illustrative of the manners of the time. On January 26th or 29th (accounts vary) ten members of an aristocratic social club sat down to dinner in Pall-mall. Lord Byron and Mr. Chaworth, his neighbour and kinsman, were of the party. In the course of the evening, when the wine was going round, a dispute arose between them about the management of game, so frivolous that one conjectures the quarrel to have been picked to cloak some other cause of offence. Bets were offered, and high words passed, but the company thought the matter had blown over. On going out, however, the disputants met on the stairs, and one of the two, it is uncertain which, cried out to the waiter to show them an empty room. This was done, and a single tallow-candle being placed on the table, the door was shut. A few minutes later a bell was rung, and the hotel master rushing in, Mr. Chaworth was found mortally wounded. There had been a struggle in the dim light, and Byron,

having received the first lunge harmlessly in his waistcoat, had shortened his sword and run his adversary through the body, with the boast, not uncharacteristic of his grand-nephew, "By G—d, I have as much courage as any man in England." A coroner's inquest was held, and he was committed to the Tower on a charge of murder. The interest in the trial, which subsequently took place in Westminster Hall, was so great that tickets of admission were sold for six guineas. The peers, after two days' discussion, unanimously returned a verdict of manslaughter. Byron, pleading his privileges, and paying his fees, was set at liberty; but he appears henceforth as a spectre-haunted man, roaming about under false names, or shut up in the Abbey like a baited savage, shunned by his fellows high and low, and the centre of the wildest stories. That he shot a coachman, and flung the body into the carriage beside his wife, who very sensibly left him; that he tried to drown her; that he had devils to attend him—were among the many weird legends of "the wicked lord." The poet himself says that his ancestor's only companions were the crickets that used to crawl over him, receive stripes with straws when they misbehaved, and on his death made an exodus in procession from the house. When at home he spent his time in pistol-shooting, making sham fights with wooden ships about the rockeries of the lake, and building ugly turrets on the battlements. He hated his heir presumptive, sold the estate of Rochdale—a proceeding afterwards challenged—and cut down the trees of Newstead, to spite him; but he survived his three sons, his brother, and his only grandson, who was killed in Corsica in 1794.

On his own death in 1798, the estates and title passed to George Gordon, then a child of ten, whom he used to talk of, without a shadow of interest, as "the little boy

who lives at Aberdeen." His sister Isabella married Lord Carlisle, and became the mother of the fifth earl, the poet's nominal guardian. She was a lady distinguished for eccentricity of manners, and (like her son satirized in the *Bards and Reviewers*) for the perpetration of indifferent verses. The career of the fourth lord's second son, John, the poet's grandfather, recalls that of the sea-kings from whom the family claim to have sprung. Born in 1723, he at an early age entered the naval service, and till his death in 1786 was tossed from storm to storm. "He had no rest on sea, nor I on shore," writes his illustrious descendant. In 1740 a fleet of five ships was sent out under Commodore Anson to annoy the Spaniards, with whom we were then at war, in the South Seas. Byron took service as a midshipman in one of those ships—all more or less unfortunate — called "The Wager." Being a bad sailer, and heavily laden, she was blown from her company, and wrecked in the Straits of Magellan. The majority of the crew were cast on a bleak rock, which they christened Mount Misery. After encountering all the horrors of mutiny and famine, and being in various ways deserted, five of the survivors, among them Captain Cheap and Mr. Byron, were taken by some Patagonians to the Island of Chiloe, and thence, after some months, to Valparaiso. They were kept for nearly two years as prisoners at St. Iago, the capital of Chili, and in December, 1744, put on board a French frigate, which reached Brest in October, 1745. Early in 1746 they arrived at Dover in a Dutch vessel.

This voyage is the subject of a well-known apostrophe in *The Pleasures of Hope*, beginning—

> "And such thy strength-inspiring aid that bore
> The hardy Byron from his native shore.

> In torrid climes, where Chiloe's tempests sweep
> Tumultuous murmurs o'er the troubled deep,
> 'Twas his to mourn misfortune's rudest shock,
> Scourged by the winds and cradled by the rock."

Byron's own account of his adventures, published in 1768, is remarkable for freshness of scenery like that of our first literary traveller, Sir John Mandeville, and a force of description which recalls Defoe. It interests us more especially from the use that has been made of it in that marvellous mosaic of voyages, the shipwreck, in *Don Juan*, the hardships of his hero being, according to the poet—

> "Comparative
> To those related in my grand-dad's narrative."

In June, 1764, Byron sailed with two ships, the "Dolphin" and the "Tamar," on a voyage of discovery arranged by Lord Egmont, to seek a southern continent, in the course of which he took possession of the largest of the Falkland Islands, again passed through the Magellanic Straits, and sailing home by the Pacific, circumnavigated the globe. The planets so conspired that, though his affable manners and considerate treatment made him always popular with his men, sailors became afraid to serve under "foul-weather Jack." In 1748 he married the daughter of a Cornish squire, John Trevanion. They had two sons and three daughters. One of the latter married her cousin (the fifth lord's eldest son), who died in 1776, leaving as his sole heir the youth who fell in the Mediterranean in 1794.

The eldest son of the veteran, John Byron, father of the poet, was born in 1751, educated at Westminster, and, having received a commission, became a captain in the guards; but his character, fundamentally unprincipled,

soon developed itself in such a manner as to alienate him from his family. In 1778, under circumstances of peculiar effrontery, he seduced Amelia D'Arcy, the daughter of the Earl of Holdernesse, in her own right Countess Conyers, then wife of the Marquis of Carmarthen, afterwards Duke of Leeds. "Mad Jack," as he was called, seems to have boasted of his conquest; but the marquis, to whom his wife had hitherto been devoted, refused to believe the rumours that were afloat, till an intercepted letter, containing a remittance of money, for which Byron, in reverse of the usual relations, was always clamouring, brought matters to a crisis. The pair decamped to the continent; and in 1779, after the marquis had obtained a divorce, they were regularly married. Byron seems to have been not only profligate but heartless, and he made life wretched to the woman he was even more than most husbands bound to cherish. She died in 1784, having given birth to two daughters. One died in infancy; the other was Augusta, the half-sister and good genius of the poet, whose memory remains like a star on the fringe of a thunder-cloud, only brighter by the passing of the smoke of calumny. In 1807 she married Colonel Leigh, and had a numerous family, most of whom died young. Her eldest daughter, Georgiana, married Mr. Henry Trevanion. The fourth, Medora, had an unfortunate history, the nucleus of an impertinent and happily ephemeral romance.

The year after the death of his first wife, John Byron, who seems to have had the fascinations of a Barry Lyndon, succeeded in entrapping a second. This was Miss Catherine Gordon of Gight, a lady with considerable estates in Aberdeenshire—which attracted the adventurer—and an overweening Highland pride in her descent from James I., the greatest of the Stuarts, through his daughter

Annabella, and the second Earl of Huntly. This union suggested the ballad of an old rhymer, beginning—

"O whare are ye gaen, bonny Miss Gordon,
O whare are ye gaen, sae bonny and braw?
Ye've married, ye've married wi' Johnny Byron,
To squander the lands o' Gight awa'."

The prophecy was soon fulfilled. The property of the Scotch heiress was squandered with impetuous rapidity by the English rake. In 1786 she left Scotland for France, and returned to England towards the close of the following year. On the 22nd of January, 1788, in Holles Street, London, Mrs. Byron gave birth to her only child, George Gordon, sixth lord. Shortly after, being pressed by his creditors, the father abandoned both, and leaving them with a pittance of 150*l.* a year, fled to Valenciennes, where he died, in August, 1791.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY YEARS AND SCHOOL LIFE.

Soon after the birth of her son, Mrs. Byron took him to Scotland. After spending some time with a relation, she, early in 1790, settled in a small house at Aberdeen. Ere long her husband, who had in the interval dissipated away his remaining means, rejoined her; and they lived together in humble lodgings, until their tempers, alike fiery and irritable, compelled a definite separation. They occupied apartments, for some time, at the opposite ends of the same street, and interchanged visits. Being accustomed to meet the boy and his nurse, the father expressed a wish that the former should be sent to live with him, at least for some days. "To this request," Moore informs us, "Mrs. Byron was at first not very willing to accede; but, on the representation of the nurse that if he kept him over one night he would not do so another, she consented. On inquiring next morning after the child, she was told by Captain Byron that he had had quite enough of his young visitor." After a short stay in the north, the Captain, extorting enough money from his wife to enable him to fly from his creditors, escaped to France. His absence must have been a relief; but his death is said to have so affected the unhappy lady, that her shrieks disturbed the neighbourhood. The circumstance recalls an anecdote of a similar outburst—attested by Sir W. Scott, who was

present on the occasion — before her marriage. Being present at a representation, in Edinburgh, of the *Fatal Marriage*, when Mrs. Siddons was personating Isabella, Miss Gordon was seized with a fit, and carried out of the theatre, screaming out "O my Biron, my Biron." All we know of her character shows it to have been not only proud, impulsive, and wayward, but hysterical. She constantly boasted of her descent, and clung to the courtesy title of "honourable," to which she had no claim. Her affection and anger were alike demonstrative, her temper never for an hour secure. She half worshipped, half hated, the blackguard to whom she was married, and took no steps to protect her property; her son she alternately petted and abused. "Your mother's a fool!" said a school companion to him years after. "I know it," was his unique and tragic reply. Never was poet born to so much illustrious, and to so much bad blood. The records of his infancy betray the temper which he preserved through life — passionate, sullen, defiant of authority, but singularly amenable to kindness. On being scolded by his first nurse for having soiled a dress, without uttering a word he tore it from top to seam, as he had seen his mother tear her caps and gowns; but her sister and successor in office, May Gray, acquired and retained a hold over his affections, to which he has borne grateful testimony. To her training is attributed the early and remarkable knowledge of the Scriptures, especially of the Psalms, which he possessed: he was, according to her later testimony, peculiarly inquisitive and puzzling about religion. Of the sense of solitude, induced by his earliest impressions, he characteristically makes a boast. "My daughter, my wife, my half-sister, my mother, my sister's mother, my natural daughter, and myself, are or were all

only children. But the fiercest animals have the fewest numbers in their litters, as lions, tigers, &c."

To this practical orphanhood, and inheritance of feverish passion, there was added another, and to him a heavy and life-long burden. A physical defect in a healthy nature may either pass without notice or be turned to a high purpose. No line of his work reveals the fact that Sir Walter Scott was lame. The infirmity failed to cast even a passing shade over that serene power. Milton's blindness is the occasion of the noblest prose and verse of resignation in the language. But to understand Pope, we must remember that he was a cripple: and Byron never allows us to forget, because he himself never forgot it. Accounts differ as to the extent and origin of his deformity; and the doubts on the matter are not removed by the inconsistent accounts of the indelicate post-mortem examination made by Mr. Trelawny at Mesolonghi. It is certain that one of the poet's feet was, either at birth or at a very early period, so seriously clubbed or twisted as to affect his gait, and to a considerable extent his habits. It also appears that the surgical means—boots, bandages, &c.—adopted to straighten the limb, only aggravated the evil. His sensitiveness on the subject was early awakened by careless or unfeeling references. "What a pretty boy Byron is!" said a friend of his nurse. "What a pity he has such a leg!" On which the child, with flashing eyes, cutting at her with a baby's whip, cried out, "Dinna speak of it." His mother herself, in her violent fits, when the boy ran round the room laughing at her attempts to catch him, used to say he was a little dog, as bad as his father, and to call him "a lame brat"—an incident which notoriously suggested the opening scene of the *Deformed Transformed*. In the height of his popularity he fancied that the beggars and

street-sweepers in London were mocking him. He satirized and discouraged dancing; he preferred riding and swimming to other exercises, because they concealed his weakness; and on his death-bed asked to be blistered in such a way that he might not be called on to expose it. The Countess Guiccioli, Lady Blessington, and others, assure us that in society few would have observed the defect if he had not referred to it; but it was never far from the mind, and therefore never far from the mouth, of the least reticent of men.

In 1792 he was sent to a rudimentary day school of girls and boys, taught by a Mr. Bowers, where he seems to have learnt nothing save to repeat monosyllables by rote. He next passed through the hands of a devout and clever clergyman, named Ross, under whom, according to his own account, he made astonishing progress, being initiated into the study of Roman history, and taking special delight in the battle of Regillus. Long afterwards, when standing on the heights of Tusculum and looking down on the little round lake, he remembered his young enthusiasm and his old instructor. He next came under the charge of a tutor called Paterson, whom he describes as "a very serious, saturnine, but kind young man. He was the son of my shoemaker, but a good scholar. With him I began Latin, and continued till I went to the grammar school, where I threaded all the classes to the fourth, when I was recalled to England by the demise of my uncle."

Of Byron's early school days there is little further record. We learn from scattered hints that he was backward in technical scholarship, and low in his class, in which he seems to have had no ambition to stand high; but that he eagerly took to history and romance, especially luxuriating in the *Arabian Nights*. He was an indifferent pen-

man, and always disliked mathematics; but was noted by masters and mates as of quick temper, eager for adventures, prone to sports, always more ready to give a blow than to take one, affectionate, though resentful.

When his cousin was killed at Corsica, in 1794, he became the next heir to the title. In 1797, a friend, meaning to compliment the boy, said, "We shall have the pleasure some day of reading your speeches in the House of Commons," he, with precocious consciousness, replied, "I hope not. If you read any speeches of mine, it will be in the House of Lords." Similarly, when, in the course of the following year, the fierce old man at Newstead died, and the young lord's name was called at school with "Dominus" prefixed to it, his emotion was so great that he was unable to answer, and burst into tears.

Belonging to this period is the somewhat shadowy record of a childish passion for a distant cousin slightly his senior, Mary Duff, with whom he claims to have fallen in love in his ninth year. We have a quaint picture of the pair sitting on the grass together, the girl's younger sister beside them playing with a doll. A German critic gravely remarks, "This strange phenomenon places him beside Dante." Byron himself, dilating on the strength of his attachment, tells us that he used to coax a maid to write letters for him, and that when he was sixteen, on being informed by his mother of Mary's marriage, he nearly fell into convulsions. But in the history of the calf-loves of poets it is difficult to distinguish between the imaginative afterthought and the reality. This equally applies to other recollections of later years. Moore remarks—"that the charm of scenery, which derives its chief power from fancy and association, should be felt at an age when fancy is yet hardly awake and associations are but few, can with diffi-

culty be conceived." But between the ages of eight and ten an appreciation of external beauty is sufficiently common. No one doubts the accuracy of Wordsworth's account, in the *Prelude*, of his early half-sensuous delight in mountain glory. It is impossible to define the influence of Nature, either on nations or individuals, or to say beforehand what selection from his varied surroundings a poet will, for artistic purposes, elect to make. Shakspeare rests in meadows and glades, and leaves to Milton "Teneriffe and Atlas." Burns, who lived for a considerable part of his life in daily view of the hills of Arran, never alludes to them. But in this respect, like Shelley, Byron was inspired by a passion for the high-places of the earth. Their shadow is on half his verse. "The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow" perpetually remind him of one of his constantly recurring refrains—

> "He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
> Must look down on the hate of those below."

In the course of 1796, after an attack of scarlet fever at Aberdeen, he was taken by his mother to Ballater, and on his recovery spent much of his time in rambling about the country. "From this period," he says, "I date my love of mountainous countries. I can never forget the effect, years afterwards, in England, of the only thing I had long seen, even in miniature, of a mountain, in the Malvern Hills. After I returned to Cheltenham I used to watch them every afternoon, at sunset, with a sensation which I cannot describe." Elsewhere, in *The Island*, he returns, amid allusions to the Alps and Apennines, to the friends of his youth:—

> "The infant rapture still survived the boy,
> And Lach-na-gair with Ida look'd o'er Troy,

Mixed Celtic memories with the Phrygian mount,
And Highland linns with Castalie's clear fount."

The poet, owing to his physical defect, was not a great climber, and we are informed, on the authority of his nurse, that he never even scaled the easily attainable summit of the "steep frowning" hill of which he has made such effective use. But the impression of it from a distance was none the less genuine. In the midst of a generous address, in *Don Juan*, to Jeffrey, he again refers to the same associations with the country of his early training:—

"But I am half a Scot by birth, and bred
A whole one; and my heart flies to my head
As 'Auld Lang Syne' brings Scotland, one and all—
Scotch plaids, Scotch snoods, the blue hills and clear streams,
The Dee, the Don, Balgounie's brig's black wall—
All my boy feelings, all my gentler dreams
Of what I then dreamt, clothed in their own pall,
Like Banquo's offspring. . . ."

Byron's allusions to Scotland are variable and inconsistent. His satire on her reviewers was sharpened by the show of national as well as personal antipathy; and when, about the time of its production, a young lady remarked that he had a little of the northern manner of speech, he burst out, "Good God! I hope not. I would rather the whole d—d country was sunk in the sea. I the Scotch accent!" But in the passage from which we have quoted the swirl of feeling on the other side continues,—

"I rail'd at Scots to show my wrath and wit,
Which must be own'd was sensitive and surly.
Yet 'tis in vain such sallies to permit;
They cannot quench young feelings, fresh and early.

> I scotch'd, not kill'd, the Scotchman in my blood,
> And love the land of mountain and of flood."

This suggests a few words on a question of more than local interest. Byron's most careful biographer has said of him: "Although on his first expedition to Greece he was dressed in the tartan of the Gordon clan, yet the whole bent of his mind, and the character of his poetry, are anything but Scottish. Scottish nationality is tainted with narrow and provincial elements. Byron's poetic character, on the other hand, is universal and cosmopolitan. He had no attachment to localities, and never devoted himself to the study of the history of Scotland and its romantic legends." Somewhat similarly Thomas Campbell remarks of Burns, "He was the most un-Scotsmanlike of Scotchmen, having no caution." Rough national verdicts are apt to be superficial. Mr. Leslie Stephen, in a review of Hawthorne, has commented on the extent to which the nobler qualities and conquering energy of the English character are hidden, not only from foreigners, but from ourselves, by the "detestable lay figure" of John Bull. In like manner, the obtrusive type of the "canny Scot" is apt to make critics forget the hot heart that has marked the early annals of the country, from the Hebrides to the Borders, with so much violence, and at the same time has been the source of so much strong feeling and persistent purpose. Of late years, the struggle for existence, the temptations of a too ambitious and over-active people in the race for wealth, and the benumbing effect of the constant profession of beliefs that have ceased to be sincere, have for the most part stifled the fervid fire in calculating prudence. These qualities have been adequately combined in Scott alone, the one massive and complete literary type of his race. Burns, to his ruin, had

only the fire: the same is true of Byron, whose genius, in some respects less genuine, was indefinitely and inevitably wider. His intensely susceptible nature took a dye from every scene, city, and society through which he passed; but to the last he bore with him the marks of a descendant of the Sea-Kings, and of the mad Gordons in whose domains he had first learned to listen to the sound of the "two mighty voices" that haunted and inspired him through life.

In the autumn of 1798 the family, *i. e.*, his mother—who had sold the whole of her household furniture for 75*l.*—with himself, and a maid, set south. The poet's only recorded impression of the journey is a gleam of Loch Leven, to which he refers in one of his latest letters. He never revisited the land of his birth. Our next glimpse of him is on his passing the toll-bar of Newstead. Mrs. Byron asked the old woman who kept it, "Who is the next heir?" and on her answer "They say it is a little boy who lives at Aberdeen," "This is he, bless him!" exclaimed the nurse.

Returned to the ancestral Abbey, and finding it half ruined and desolate, they migrated for a time to the neighbouring Nottingham. Here the child's first experience was another course of surgical torture. He was placed under the charge of a quack named Lavender, who rubbed his foot in oil, and screwed it about in wooden machines. This useless treatment is associated with two characteristic anecdotes. One relates to the endurance which Byron, on every occasion of mere physical trial, was capable of displaying. Mr. Rogers, a private tutor, with whom he was reading passages of Virgil and Cicero, remarked, "It makes me uncomfortable, my lord, to see you sitting there in such pain as I know you must be suffering." "Never

mind, Mr. Rogers," said the child, "you shall not see any signs of it in me." The other illustrates his precocious delight in detecting imposture. Having scribbled on a piece of paper several lines of mere gibberish, he brought them to Lavender, and gravely asked what language it was; and on receiving the answer, "It is Italian," he broke into an exultant laugh at the expense of his tormentor. Another story survives, of his vindictive spirit giving birth to his first rhymes. A meddling old lady, who used to visit his mother and was possessed of a curious belief in a future transmigration to our satellite—the bleakness of whose scenery she had not realized—having given him some cause of offence, he stormed out to his nurse that he "could not bear the sight of the witch," and vented his wrath in the couplet,—

> "In Nottingham county there lives, at Swan Green,
> As curst an old lady as ever was seen;
> And when she does die, which I hope will be soon,
> She firmly believes she will go to the moon."

The poet himself dates his "first dash into poetry" a year later (1800), from his juvenile passion for his cousin Margaret Parker, whose subsequent death from an injury caused by a fall he afterwards deplored in a forgotten elegy. "I do not recollect," he writes through the transfiguring mists of memory, "anything equal to the *transparent* beauty of my cousin, or to the sweetness of her temper, during the short period of our intimacy. She looked as if she had been made out of a rainbow—all beauty and peace. My passion had the usual effects upon me—I could not sleep; I could not eat; I could not rest. It was the texture of my life to think of the time that must elapse before we could meet again. But I was a fool then, and not much wiser now." *Sic transit secunda.*

The departure at a somewhat earlier date of May Gray for her native country gave rise to evidence of another kind of affection. On her leaving, he presented her with his first watch, and a miniature by Kay, of Edinburgh, representing him with a bow and arrow in his hand and a profusion of hair over his shoulders. He continued to correspond with her at intervals. Byron was always beloved by his servants. This nurse afterwards married well, and during her last illness, in 1827, communicated to her attendant, Dr. Ewing, of Aberdeen, recollections of the poet, from which his biographers have drawn.

In the summer of 1799 he was sent to London, entrusted to the medical care of Dr. Baillie (brother of Joanna, the dramatist), and placed in a boarding school at Dulwich, under the charge of Dr. Glennie. The physician advised a moderation in athletic sports, which the patient in his hours of liberty was constantly apt to exceed. The teacher—who continued to cherish an affectionate remembrance of his pupil, even when he was told, on a visit to Geneva in 1817, that he ought to have "made a better boy of him"—testifies to the alacrity with which he entered on his tasks, his playful good-humour with his comrades, his reading in history beyond his age, and his intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures. "In my study," he states, "he found many books open to him; among others, a set of our poets from Chaucer to Churchill, which I am almost tempted to say he had more than once perused from beginning to end." One of the books referred to was the *Narrative of the Shipwreck of the "Juno,"* which contains, almost word for word, the account of the "two fathers," in *Don Juan.* Meanwhile Mrs. Byron—whose reduced income had been opportunely augmented by a grant of a 300*l.* annuity from the

Civil List—after revisiting Newstead, followed her son to London, and took up her residence in a house in Sloane-terrace. She was in the habit of having him with her there from Saturday to Monday, kept him from school for weeks, introduced him to idle company, and in other ways was continually hampering his progress.

Byron on his accession to the peerage, having become a ward in Chancery, was handed over by the Court to the guardianship of Lord Carlisle, nephew of the admiral, and son of the grand-aunt of the poet. Like his mother, this earl aspired to be a poet, and his tragedy, *The Father's Revenge*, received some commendation from Dr. Johnson; but his relations with his illustrious kinsman were from the first unsatisfactory. In answer to Dr. Glennie's appeal, he exerted his authority against the interruptions to his ward's education; but the attempt to mend matters led to such outrageous exhibitions of temper that he said to the master, "I can have nothing more to do with Mrs. Byron; you must now manage her as you can." Finally, after two years of work, which she had done her best to mar, she herself requested his guardian to have her son removed to a public school, and accordingly he went to Harrow, where he remained till the autumn of 1805. The first vacation, in the summer of 1801, is marked by his visit to Cheltenham, where his mother, from whom he inherited a fair amount of Scotch superstition, consulted a fortune-teller, who said he would be twice married, the second time to a foreigner.

Harrow was then under the management of Dr. Joseph Drury, one of the most estimable of its distinguished head-masters. His account of the first impressions produced by his pupil, and his judicious manner of handling a sensitive nature, cannot with advantage be condensed.

"Mr. Hanson," he writes, "Lord Byron's solicitor, consigned him to my care at the age of thirteen and a half, with remarks that his education had been neglected; that he was ill prepared for a public school; but that he thought there was a *cleverness* about him. After his departure I took my young disciple into my study, and endeavoured to bring him forward by inquiries as to his former amusements, employments, and associates, but with little or no effect, and I soon found that a wild mountain colt had been submitted to my management. But there was mind in his eye. In the first place, it was necessary to attach him to an elder boy; but the information he received gave him no pleasure when he heard of the advances of some much younger than himself. This I discovered, and assured him that he should not be placed till by diligence he might rank with those of his own age. His manner and temper soon convinced me that he might be led by a silken string to a point, rather than a cable: on that principle I acted."

After a time, Dr. Drury tells us that he waited on Lord Carlisle, who wished to give some information about his ward's property and to inquire respecting his abilities, and continues: "On the former circumstance I made no remark; as to the latter I replied, 'He has talents, my lord, which will add lustre to his rank.' 'Indeed!' said his lordship, with a degree of surprise that, according to my feeling, did not express in it all the satisfaction I expected." With, perhaps, unconscious humour on the part of the writer, we are left in doubt as to whether the indifference proceeded from the jealousy that clings to poetasters, from incredulity, or a feeling that no talent could add lustre to rank.

In 1804 Byron refers to the antipathy his mother had

to his guardian. Later he expresses gratitude for some unknown service, in recognition of which the second edition of the *Hours of Idleness* was dedicated "by his obliged ward and affectionate kinsman," to Lord Carlisle. The tribute being coldly received, led to fresh estrangement, and when Byron, on his coming of age, wrote to remind the earl of the fact, in expectation of being introduced to the House of Peers, he had for answer a mere formal statement of its rules. This rebuff affected him as Addison's praise of Tickell affected Pope, and the following lines were published in the March of the same year:—

> "Lords too are bards! such things at times befall,
> And 'tis some praise in peers to write at all.
> Yet did or taste or reason sway the times,
> Ah! who would take their titles with their rhymes.
> Roscommon! Sheffield! with your spirits fled,
> No future laurels deck a noble head;
> No muse will cheer, with renovating smile,
> The paralytic puling of Carlisle."

In prose he adds, "If, before I escaped from my teens, I said anything in favour of his lordship's paper-books it was in the way of dutiful dedication, and more from the advice of others than my own judgment; and I seize the first opportunity of pronouncing my sincere recantation." As was frequently the case with him, he recanted again. In a letter of 1814 he expressed to Rogers his regret for his sarcasms; and in his reference to the death of the Hon. Frederick Howard, in the third canto of *Childe Harold*, he tried to make amends in the lines—

> "Yet one I would select from that proud throng,
> Partly because they blend me with his line,
> And partly that I did his sire some wrong."

This is all of any interest we know regarding the fitful connection of the guardian and ward.

Towards Dr. Drury the poet continued through life to cherish sentiments of gratitude, and always spoke of him with veneration. "He was," he says, "the best, the kindest (and yet strict too) friend I ever had; and I look on him still as a father, whose warnings I have remembered but too well, though too late, when I have erred, and whose counsel I have but followed when I have done well or wisely."

Great educational institutions must consult the greatest good of the greatest number of commonplace minds, by regulations against which genius is apt to kick; and Byron, who was by nature and lack of discipline peculiarly ill-fitted to conform to routine, confesses that till the last year and a half he hated Harrow. He never took kindly to the studies of the place, and was at no time an accurate scholar. In the *Bards and Reviewers*, and elsewhere, he evinces considerable familiarity with the leading authors of antiquity, but it is doubtful whether he was able to read any of the more difficult of them in the original. His translations are generally commonplace, and from the marks on his books he must have often failed to trust his memory for the meanings of the most ordinary Greek words. To the well-known passage in *Childe Harold* on Soracte and the "Latian echoes" he appends a prose comment which preserves its interest as bearing on recent educational controversies: "I wish to express that we become tired of the task before we can comprehend the beauty; that we learn by rote before we get by heart; that the freshness is worn away, and the future pleasure and advantage deadened and destroyed, at an age when we can neither feel nor understand the power of composition, which

it requires an acquaintance with life, as well as Latin and Greek, to relish or to reason upon. . . . In some parts of the continent young persons are taught from common authors, and do not read the best classics till their maturity."

Comparatively slight stress was then laid on modern languages. Byron learnt to read French with fluency, as he certainly made himself familiar with the great works of the eighteenth century; but he spoke it with so little ease or accuracy that the fact was always a stumbling-block to his meeting Frenchmen abroad. Of German he had a mere smattering. Italian was the only language, besides his own, of which he was ever a master. But the extent and variety of his general reading was remarkable. His list of books, drawn up in 1807, includes more history and biography than most men of education read during a long life; a fair load of philosophy; the poets *en masse;* among orators, Demosthenes, Cicero, and Parliamentary debates from the Revolution to the year 1742; pretty copious divinity, including Blair, Tillotson, Hooker, with the characteristic addition—"all very tiresome. I abhor books of religion, though I reverence and love my God without the blasphemous notions of sectaries." Lastly, under the head of "Miscellanies" we have *Spectator*, *Rambler*, *World*, &c., &c.; among novels, the works of Cervantes, Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, Mackenzie, Sterne, Rabelais, and Rousseau. He recommends Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* as the best storehouse for second-hand quotations, as Sterne and others have found it, and tells us that the great part of the books named were perused before the age of fifteen. Making allowance for the fact that most of the poet's autobiographic sketches are emphatically "*Dichtung und Wahrheit*," we can believe that he was an omnivorous reader—"I read eating, read

in bed, read when no one else reads"—and, having a memory only less retentive than Macaulay's, acquired so much general information as to be suspected of picking it up from Reviews. He himself declares that he never read a Review till he was eighteen years old—when he himself wrote one, utterly worthless, on Wordsworth.

At Harrow, Byron proved himself capable of violent fits of work, but of "few continuous drudgeries." He would turn out an unusual number of hexameters, and again lapse into as much idleness as the teachers would tolerate. His forte was in declamation: his attitude and delivery, and power of extemporizing, surprised even critical listeners into unguarded praise. "My qualities," he says, "were much more oratorical and martial than poetical; no one had the least notion that I should subside into poesy." Unpopular at first, he began to like school when he had fought his way to be a champion, and from his energy in sports more than from the impression produced by his talents had come to be recognized as a leader among his fellows. Unfortunately, towards the close of his course, in 1805, the headship of Harrow changed hands. Dr. Drury retired, and was succeeded by Dr. Butler. This event suggested the lines beginning—

> "Where are those honours, Ida, once your own,
> When Probus fill'd your magisterial throne?"

The appointment was generally unpopular among the boys, whose sympathies were enlisted in favour of Henry Drury, the son of their former master, and Dr. Butler seems for a time to have had considerable difficulty in maintaining discipline. Byron, always "famous for rowing," was a ringleader of the rebellious party, and compared himself to Tyrtæus. On one occasion he tore down the window

gratings in a room of the school-house, with the remark that they darkened the hall; on another he is reported to have refused a dinner invitation from the master, with the impertinent remark that he would never think of asking him in return to dine at Newstead. On the other hand, he seems to have set limits to the mutiny, and prevented some of the boys from setting their desks on fire by pointing to their fathers' names carved on them. Byron afterwards expressed regret for his rudeness; but Butler remains in his verse as "Pomposus of narrow brain, yet of a narrower soul."

Of the poet's free hours, during the last years of his residence, which he refers to as among the happiest of his life, many were spent in solitary musing by an elm-tree, near a tomb to which his name has been given—a spot commanding a far view of London, of Windsor "blossomed high in tufted trees," and of the green fields that stretch between, covered in spring with the white and red snow of apple blossom. The others were devoted to the society of his chosen comrades. Byron, if not one of the safest, was one of the warmest of friends, and he plucked the more eagerly at the choicest fruit of English public school and college life, from the feeling he so pathetically expresses,—

> "Is there no cause beyond the common claim,
> Endear'd to all in childhood's very name?
> Ah, sure some stronger impulse vibrates here,
> Which whispers Friendship will be doubly dear
> To one who thus for kindred hearts must roam,
> And seek abroad the love denied at home.
> Those hearts, dear Ida, have I found in thee—
> A home, a world, a paradise to me."

Of his Harrow intimates, the most prominent were the Duke of Dorset, the poet's favoured fag; Lord Clare (the

Lycus of the *Childish Recollections*); Lord Delawarr (the Euryalus); John Wingfield (Alonzo), who died at Coimbra, 1811; Cecil Tattersall (Davus); Edward Noel Long (Cleon); Wildman, afterwards proprietor of Newstead; and Sir Robert Peel. Of the last, his form-fellow and most famous of his mates, the story is told of his being unmercifully beaten for offering resistance to his fag master, and Byron rushing up to intercede with an offer to take half the blows. Peel was an exact contemporary, having been born in the same year, 1788. It has been remarked that most of the poet's associates were his juniors, and, less fairly, that he liked to regard them as his satellites. But even at Dulwich his ostentation of rank had provoked for him the nickname of "the old English baron." To Wildman, who, as a senior, had a right of inflicting chastisement for offences, he said, "I find you have got Delawarr on your list; pray don't lick him." "Why not?" was the reply. "Why, I don't know, except that he is a brother peer." Again, he interfered with the more effectual arm of physical force to rescue a junior protégé — lame like himself, and otherwise much weaker—from the ill-treatment of some hulking tyrant. "Harness," he said, "if any one bullies you, tell me, and I'll thrash him if I can;" and he kept his word. Harness became an accomplished clergyman and minor poet, and has left some pleasing reminiscences of his former patron. The prodigy of the school, George Sinclair, was in the habit of writing the poet's exercises, and getting his battles fought for him in return. His bosom friend was Lord Clare. To him his confidences were most freely given, and his most affectionate verses addressed. In the characteristic stanzas entitled "L'amitié est l'amour sans ailes," we feel as if between them the qualifying phrase

might have been omitted; for their letters, carefully preserved on either side, are a record of the jealous complaints and the reconciliations of lovers. In 1821 Byron writes, "I never hear the name Clare without a beating of the heart even now; and I write it with the feelings of 1803–4–5, *ad infinitum*." At the same date he says of an accidental meeting: "It annihilated for a moment all the years between the present time and the days of Harrow. It was a new and inexplicable feeling, like a rising from the grave to me. Clare too was much agitated—more in appearance than I was myself—for I could feel his heart beat to his fingers' ends, unless, indeed, it was the pulse of my own which made me think so. We were but five minutes together on the public road, but I hardly recollect an hour of my existence that could be weighed against them." They were "all that brothers should be but the name;" and it is interesting to trace this relationship between the greatest genius of the new time and the son of the statesman who, in the preceding age, stands out serene and strong amid the swarm of turbulent rioters and ranting orators by whom he was surrounded and reviled.

Before leaving Harrow the poet had passed through the experience of a passion of another kind, with a result that unhappily coloured his life. Accounts differ as to his first meeting with Mary Ann Chaworth, the heiress of the family whose estates adjoined his own, and daughter of the race that had held with his such varied relations. In one of his letters he dates the introduction previous to his trip to Cheltenham, but it seems not to have ripened into intimacy till a later period. Byron, who had, in the autumn of 1802, visited his mother at Bath, joined in a masquerade there, and attracted attention by the liveliness of his manners. In the following year Mrs. Byron again

settled at Nottingham, and in the course of a second and longer visit to her he frequently passed the night at the Abbey, of which Lord Grey de Ruthven was then a temporary tenant. This was the occasion of his renewing his acquaintance with the Chaworths, who invited him to their seat at Annesley. He used at first to return every evening to Newstead, giving the excuse that the family pictures would come down and take revenge on him for his grand-uncle's deed, a fancy repeated in the *Siege of Corinth*. Latterly he consented to stay at Annesley, which thus became his headquarters during the remainder of the holidays of 1803. The rest of the six weeks were mainly consumed in an excursion to Matlock and Castleton, in the same companionship. This short period, with the exception of prologue and epilogue, embraced the whole story of his first real love. Byron was on this occasion in earnest; he wished to marry Miss Chaworth, an event which, he says, would have "joined broad lands, healed an old feud, and satisfied at least one heart."

The intensity of his passion is suggestively brought before us in an account of his crossing the Styx of the Peak cavern, alone with the lady and the Charon of the boat. In the same passage he informs us that he had never told his love; but that she had discovered—it is obvious that she never returned—it. We have another vivid picture of his irritation when she was waltzing in his presence at Matlock; then an account of their riding together in the country on their return to the family residence; again, of his bending over the piano as she was playing the Welsh air of "Mary Anne;" and, lastly, of his overhearing her heartless speech to her maid, which first opened his eyes to the real state of affairs—"Do you think I could care for that lame boy?"—upon which he rushed out of the

house, and ran, like a hunted creature, to Newstead. Thence he shortly returned from the rougher school of life to his haunts and tasks at Harrow. A year later the pair again met to take farewell, on the hill of Annesley—an incident he has commemorated in two short stanzas, that have the sound of a wind moaning over a moor. "I suppose," he said, "the next time I see you, you will be Mrs. Chaworth?" "I hope so," she replied (her betrothed, Mr. Musters, had agreed to assume her family name). The announcement of her marriage, which took place in August, 1805, was made to him by his mother, with the remark, "I have some news for you. Take out your handkerchief; you will require it." On hearing what she had to say, with forced calm he turned the conversation to other subjects; but he was long haunted by a loss which he has made the theme of many of his verses. In 1807 he sent to the lady herself the lines beginning—

"O had my fate been joined with thine."

In the following year he accepted an invitation to dine at Annesley, and was visibly affected by the sight of the infant daughter of Mrs. Chaworth, to whom he addressed a touching congratulation. Shortly afterwards, when about to leave England for the first time, he finally addressed her in the stanzas—

"'Tis done, and shivering in the gale,
The bark unfurls her snowy sail."

Some years later, having an opportunity of revisiting the family of his successful rival, Mrs. Leigh dissuaded him. "Don't go," she said, "for if you do you will certainly fall in love again, and there will be a scene." The romance of the story culminates in the famous *Dream*, a

poem of unequal merit, but containing passages of real pathos, written in the year 1816 at Diodati, as we are told, amid a flood of tears.

Miss Chaworth's attractions, beyond those of personal beauty, seem to have been mainly due—a common occurrence — to the poet's imagination. A young lady, two years his senior, of a lively and volatile temper, she enjoyed the stolen interviews at the gate between the grounds, and laughed at the ardent letters, passed through a confidant, of the still awkward youth whom she regarded as a boy. She had no intuition to divine the presence, or appreciate the worship, of one of the future master-minds of England, nor any ambition to ally herself with the wild race of Newstead, and preferred her hale, commonplace, fox-hunting squire. "She was the beau ideal," says Byron, in his first accurate prose account of the affair, written 1823, a few days before his departure for Greece, "of all that my youthful fancy could paint of beautiful. And I have taken all my fables about the celestial nature of women from the perfection my imagination created in her. I say created; for I found her, like the rest of the sex, anything but angelic."

Mrs. Musters (her husband re-asserted his right to his own name) had in the long-run reason to regret her choice. The ill-assorted pair, after some unhappy years, resolved on separation; and falling into bad health and worse spirits, the "bright morning star of Annesley" passed under a cloud of mental darkness. She died, in 1832, of fright caused by a Nottingham riot. On the decease of Musters, in 1850, every relic of her ancient family was sold by auction and scattered to the winds.

CHAPTER III.

CAMBRIDGE, AND FIRST PERIOD OF AUTHORSHIP.

In October, 1805, on the advice of Dr. Drury, Byron was removed to Trinity College, Cambridge, and kept up a connexion with the University for less than three years of very irregular attendance, during which we hear nothing of his studies, except the contempt for them expressed in some of the least effective passages of his early satires. He came into residence in bad temper and low spirits. His attachment to Harrow characteristically redoubled as the time drew near to leave it, and his rest was broken "for the last quarter, with counting the hours that remained." He was about to start by himself, with the heavy feeling that he was no longer a boy, and yet against his choice, for he wished to go to Oxford. The *Hours of Idleness*, the product of this period, are fairly named. He was so idle as regards "problems mathematic," and "barbarous Latin," that it is matter of surprise to learn that he was able to take his degree, as he did, in March, 1808.

A good German critic, dwelling on the comparatively narrow range of studies to which the energies of Cambridge were then mainly directed, adds, somewhat rashly, that English national literature stands for the most part beyond the range of the academic circle. This statement is often reiterated with persistent inaccuracy; but the

most casual reference to biography informs us that at least four-fifths of the leading statesmen, reformers, and philosophers of England have been nurtured within the walls of her universities, and cherished a portion of their spirit. From them have sprung the intellectual fires that have, at every crisis of our history, kindled the nation into a new life; from the age of Wycliffe, through those of Latimer, Locke, Gibbon, Macaulay, to the present reign of the Physicists, comparatively few of the motors of their age have been wholly "without the academic circle." Analysing with the same view the lives of the British poets of real note from Barbour to Tennyson, we find the proportion of University men increases. "Poeta nascitur et fit;" and if the demands of technical routine have sometimes tended to stifle the comparative repose of a seclusion "unravaged" by the fierce activities around it, the habit of dwelling on the old wisdom and harping on the ancient strings, is calculated to foster the poetic temper and enrich its resources. The discouraging effect of a sometimes supercilious and conservative criticism is not an unmixed evil. The verse-writer who can be snuffed out by the cavils of a tutorial drone is a poetaster silenced for his country's good. It is true, however, that to original minds, bubbling with spontaneity, or arrogant with the consciousness of power, the discipline is hard, and the restraint excessive; and that the men whom their colleges are most proud to remember, have handled them severely. Bacon inveighs against the scholastic trifling of his day; Milton talks of the waste of time on litigious brawling; Locke mocks at the logic of the schools; Cowley complains of being taught words, not things; Gibbon rejoices over his escape from the port and prejudice of Magdalen; Wordsworth contemns the "trade in classic niceties," and

roves "in magisterial liberty" by the Cam, as afterwards among the hills.

But all those hostile critics owe much to the object of their animadversion. Any schoolboy can refer the preference of Light to Fruit in the *Novum Organum*, half of *Comus* and *Lycidas*, the stately periods of the *Decline and Fall*, and the severe beauties of *Laodamia*, to the better influences of academic training on the minds of their authors. Similarly, the richest pages of Byron's work—from the date of *The Curse of Minerva* to that of the "Isles of Greece"—are brightened by lights and adorned by allusions due to his training, imperfect as it was, on the slopes of Harrow, and the associations fostered during his truant years by the sluggish stream of his "Injusta noverca." At her, however, he continued to rail as late as the publication of *Beppo*, in the 75th and 76th stanzas of which we find another cause of complaint—

> "One hates an author that's all author, fellows
> In foolscap uniforms turn'd up with ink—
> So very anxious, clever, fine, and jealous,
> One don't know what to say to them, or think."

Then, after commending Scott, Rogers, and Moore for being men of the world, he proceeds:—

> "But for the children of the 'mighty mothers,'
> The would-be wits and can't-be gentlemen,
> I leave them to the daily 'Tea is ready,'
> Snug coterie, and literary lady."

This attack, which called forth a counter-invective of unusual ferocity from some unknown scribbler, is the expression of a sentiment which, sound enough within limits, Byron pushed to an extreme. He had a rooted dislike of professional *littérateurs*, and was always haunted by a dread

that they would claim equality with him on the common ground of authorship. He aspired through life to the superiority of a double distinction—that of a peer among poets, and a poet among peers. In this same spirit he resented the comparison frequently made between him and Rousseau, and insisted on points of contrast. "He had a bad memory—I a good one. He was of the people—I of the aristocracy." Byron was capable of unbending where the difference of rank was so great that it could not be ignored. On this principle we may explain his enthusiastic regard for the chorister Eddlestone, from whom he received the cornelian that is the theme of some of his verses, and whose untimely death in 1811 he sincerely mourned.

Of his Harrow friends, Harness and Long in due course followed him to Cambridge, where their common pursuits were renewed. With the latter—who was drowned in 1809, on a passage to Lisbon with his regiment—he spent a considerable portion of his time on the Cam, swimming and diving, in which art they were so expert as to pick up eggs, plates, thimbles, and coins from a depth of fourteen feet—incidents recalled to the poet's mind by reading Milton's invocation to Sabrina. During the same period he distinguished himself at cricket, as in boxing, riding, and shooting. Of his skill as a rider there are various accounts. He was an undoubted marksman, and his habit of carrying about pistols, and use of them wherever he went, was often a source of annoyance and alarm. He professed a theoretical objection to duelling, but was as ready to take a challenge as Scott, and more ready to send one.

Regarding the masters and professors of Cambridge, Byron has little to say. His own tutor, Tavell, appears pleasantly enough in his verse, and he commends the head

of his college, Dr. Lort Mansel, for dignified demeanour in his office and a past reputation for convivial wit. His attentions to Professor Hailstone at Harrowgate were graciously offered and received; but in a letter to Murray he gives a graphically abusive account of Porson, "hiccuping Greek like a Helot" in his cups. The poet was first introduced at Cambridge to a brilliant circle of contemporaries, whose talents or attainments soon made them more or less conspicuous, and most of whom are interesting on their own account as well as from their connexion with the subsequent phases of his career. By common consent Charles Skinner Matthews, son of the member for Herefordshire, 1802–6, was the most remarkable of the group. Distinguished alike for scholarship, physical and mental courage, subtlety of thought, humour of fancy, and fascinations of character, this young man seems to have made an impression on the undergraduates of his own, similar to that left by Charles Austin on those of a later generation. The loss of this friend Byron always regarded as an incalculable calamity. In a note to *Childe Harold* he writes: "I should have ventured on a verse to the memory of Matthews, were he not too much above all praise of mine. His powers of mind shown in the attainment of greater honours, against the ablest candidates, than those of any graduate on record at Cambridge, have sufficiently established his fame on the spot where it was acquired; while his softer qualities live in the recollection of friends who loved him too well to envy his superiority." He was drowned when bathing alone among the reeds of the Cam, in the summer of 1811.

In a letter written from Ravenna in 1820, Byron, in answer to a request for contributions to a proposed memoir, introduces into his notes much autobiographical matter.

In reference to a joint visit to Newstead he writes: "Matthews and myself had travelled down from London together, talking all the way incessantly upon one single topic. When we got to Loughborough, I know not what chasm had made us diverge for a moment to some other subject, at which he was indignant. 'Come,' said he, 'don't let us break through; let us go on as we began, to our journey's end;' and so he continued, and was as entertaining as ever to the very end. He had previously occupied, during my year's absence from Cambridge, my rooms in Trinity, with the furniture; and Jones (the gyp), in his odd way, had said, in putting him in, 'Mr. Matthews, I recommend to your attention not to damage any of the movables, for Lord Byron, sir, is a young man of *tumultuous passions*.' Matthews was delighted with this, and whenever anybody came to visit him, begged them to handle the very door with caution, and used to repeat Jones's admonition in his tone and manner. . . . He had the same droll sardonic way about everything. A wild Irishman, named F., one evening beginning to say something at a large supper, Matthews roared, 'Silence!' and then, pointing to F., cried out, in the words of the oracle, 'Orson is endowed with reason.' When Sir Henry Smith was expelled from Cambridge for a row with a tradesman named 'Hiron,' Matthews solaced himself with shouting under Hiron's windows every evening—

> 'Ah me! what perils do environ
> The man who meddles with hot Hiron!'

He was also of that band of scoffers who used to rouse Lort Mansel from his slumbers in the lodge of Trinity; and when he appeared at the window, foaming with wrath, and crying out, 'I know you, gentlemen—I know you!'

were wont to reply, 'We beseech thee to hear us, good Lort. Good Lort, deliver us!'"

The whole letter, written in the poet's mature and natural style, gives a vivid picture of the social life and surroundings of his Cambridge days: how much of the set and sententious moralizing of some of his formal biographers might we not have spared, for a report of the conversation on the road from London to Newstead. Of the others gathered round the same centre, Scrope Davies enlisted the largest share of Byron's affections. To him he wrote after the catastrophe: "Come to me, Scrope; I am almost desolate—left alone in the world. I had but you, and H., and M., and let me enjoy the survivors while I can." Later he says, "Matthews, Davies, Hobhouse, and myself formed a coterie of our own. Davies has always beaten us all in the war of words, and by colloquial powers at once delighted and kept us in order; even M. yielded to the dashing vivacity of S. D." The last is everywhere commended for the brilliancy of his wit and repartee: he was never afraid to speak the truth. Once when the poet, in one of his fits of petulance, exclaimed, intending to produce a terrible impression, "I shall go *mad!*" Davies calmly and cuttingly observed, "It is much more like silliness than madness!" He was the only man who ever laid Byron under any serious pecuniary obligation, having lent him 4800*l.* in some time of strait. This was repaid on March 27, 1814, when the pair sat up over champagne and claret from six till midnight, after which "Scrope could not be got into the carriage on the way home, but remained tipsy and pious on his knees." Davies was much disconcerted at the influence which the sceptical opinions of Matthews threatened to exercise over Byron's mind. The fourth of this quadrangle of amity was John

Cam Hobhouse, afterwards Lord Broughton, the steadfast friend of the poet's whole life, the companion of his travels, the witness of his marriage, the executor of his will, the zealous guardian and vindicator of his fame. His ability is abundantly attested by the impression he left on his contemporaries, his published description of the Pilgrimage, and subsequent literary and political career. Byron bears witness to the warmth of his affections and the charms of his conversation, and to the candour which, as he confessed to Lady Blessington, sometimes tried his patience. There is little doubt that they had some misunderstanding when travelling together, but it was a passing cloud. Eighteen months after his return the poet admits that Hobhouse was his best friend; and when he unexpectedly walked up the stairs of the Palazzo Lanfranchi, at Pisa, Madame Guiccioli informs us that Byron was seized with such violent emotion, and so extreme an excess of joy, that it seemed to take away his strength, and he was forced to sit down in tears.

On the edge of this inner circle, and in many respects associated with it, was the Rev. Francis Hodgson, a ripe scholar, good translator, a sound critic, a fluent writer of graceful verse, and a large-hearted divine, whose correspondence, recently edited with a connecting narrative by his son, has thrown light on disputed passages of Lord Byron's life. The views entertained by the friends on literary matters were almost identical; they both fought under the standards of the classic school; they resented the same criticisms, they applauded the same successes, and were bound together by the strong tie of mutual admiration. Byron commends Hodgson's verses, and encourages him to write; Hodgson recognizes in the *Bards and Reviewers* and the early cantos of *Childe Harold* the

promise of *Manfred* and *Cain*. Among the associates who strove to bring the poet back to the anchorage of fixed belief, and to wean him from the error of his thoughts, Francis Hodgson was the most charitable, and therefore the most judicious. That his cautions and exhortations were never stultified by pedantry or excessive dogmatism, is apparent from the frank and unguarded answers which they called forth. In several, which are preserved, and some for the first time reproduced in the recently-published Memoir, we are struck by the mixture of audacity and superficial dogmatism, sometimes amounting to effrontery, that is apt to characterize the negations of a youthful sceptic. In September, 1811, Byron writes from Newstead: "I will have nothing to do with your immortality; we are miserable enough in this life, without the absurdity of speculating upon another. Christ came to save men, but a good Pagan will go to heaven, and a bad Nazarene to hell. I am no Platonist, I am nothing at all; but I would sooner be a Paulician, Manichean, Spinozist, Gentile, Pyrrhonian, Zoroastrian, than one of the seventy-two villainous sects who are tearing each other to pieces for the love of the Lord and hatred of each other. I will bring ten Mussulmen, shall shame you all in good-will towards men and prayer to God." On a similar outburst in verse, the Rev. F. Hodgson comments with a sweet humanity, "The poor dear soul meant nothing of this." Elsewhere the poet writes, "I have read Watson to Gibbon. He proves nothing; so I am where I was, verging towards Spinoza; and yet it is a gloomy creed; and I want a better; but there is something pagan in me that I cannot shake off. *In short, I deny nothing, but doubt everything.*" But his early attitude on matters of religion is best set forth in a letter to Gifford, of 1813, in which he says, "I am no bigot

to infidelity, and did not expect that, because I doubted the immortality of man, I should be charged with denying the existence of a God. It was the comparative insignificance of ourselves and our world, when placed in comparison of the mighty whole of which man is an atom, that first led me to imagine that our pretensions to eternity might be overrated. This, and being early disgusted with a Calvinistic Scotch school, where I was cudgelled to church for the first ten years of my life, afflicted me with this malady; for, after all, it is, I believe, a disease of the mind, as much as other kinds of hypochondria."

Hodgson was a type of friendly forbearance and loyal attachment, which had for their return a perfect open-heartedness in his correspondent. To no one did the poet more freely abuse himself; to no one did he indulge in more reckless sallies of humour; to no one did he more readily betray his little conceits. From him Byron sought and received advice, and he owed to him the prevention of what might have been a most foolish and disastrous encounter. On the other hand, the clergyman was the recipient of one of the poet's many single-hearted acts of munificence—a gift of 1000*l.*, to pay off debts to which he had been left heir. In a letter to his uncle, the former gratefully alludes to this generosity: "Oh, if you knew the exultation of heart, aye, and of head too, I feel at being free from those depressing embarrassments, you would, as I do, bless my dearest friend and brother, Byron." The whole transaction is a pleasing record of a benefit that was neither sooner nor later resented by the receiver.

Among other associates of the same group should be mentioned Henry Drury—long Hodgson's intimate friend, and ultimately his brother-in-law, to whom many of Byron's first series of letters from abroad are addressed—

and Robert Charles Dallas, a name surrounded with various associations, who played a not insignificant part in Byron's history, and, after his death, helped to swell the throng of his annotators. This gentleman, a connexion by marriage, and author of some now forgotten novels, first made acquaintance with the poet in London early in 1808, when we have two letters from Byron, in answer to some compliment on his early volume, in which, though addressing his correspondent merely as "Sir," his flippancy and habit of boasting of excessive badness reach an absurd climax.

Meanwhile, during the intervals of his attendance at college, Byron had made other friends. His vacations were divided between London and Southwell, a small town on the road from Mansfield and Newark, once a refuge of Charles I., and still adorned by an old Norman minster. Here Mrs. Byron for several summer seasons took up her abode, and was frequently joined by her son. He was introduced to John Pigot, a medical student of Edinburgh, and his sister Elizabeth, both endowed with talents above the average, and keenly interested in literary pursuits, to whom a number of his letters are addressed; also to the Rev. J. T. Becher, author of a treatise on the state of the poor, to whom he was indebted for encouragement and counsel. The poet often rails at the place, which he found dull in comparison with Cambridge and London; writing from the latter, in 1807: "O Southwell, how I rejoice to have left thee! and how I curse the heavy hours I dragged along for so many months among the Mohawks who inhabit your kraals!" and adding that his sole satisfaction during his residence there was having pared off some pounds of flesh. Notwithstanding, in the small but select society of this inland watering-place he passed, on the whole, a pleasant time—listening to the music of the

simple ballads in which he delighted, taking part in the performances of the local theatre, making excursions, and writing verses. This otherwise quiet time was disturbed by exhibitions of violence on the part of Mrs. Byron, which suggest the idea of insanity. After one more outrageous than usual, both mother and son are said to have gone to the neighbouring apothecary, each to request him not to supply the other with poison. On a later occasion, when he had been meeting her bursts of rage with stubborn mockery, she flung a poker at his head, and narrowly missed her aim. Upon this he took flight to London, and his Hydra or Alecto, as he calls her, followed: on their meeting, a truce was patched, and they withdrew in opposite directions, she back to Southwell, he to refresh himself on the Sussex coast, till in the August of the same year (1806) he again rejoined her. Shortly afterwards we have from Pigot a description of a trip to Harrowgate, when his lordship's favourite Newfoundland, Boatswain, whose relation to his master recalls that of Bounce to Pope, or Maida to Scott, sat on the box.

In November Byron printed for private circulation the first issue of his juvenile poems. Mr. Becher having called his attention to one which he thought objectionable, the impression was destroyed; and the author set to work upon another, which, at once weeded and amplified, saw the light in January, 1807. He sent copies, under the title of *Juvenilia*, to several of his friends, and among others to Henry Mackenzie (the Man of Feeling), and to Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee. Encouraged by their favourable notices, he determined to appeal to a wider audience, and in March, 1807, the *Hours of Idleness*, still proceeding from the local press at Newark, were given to

the world. In June we find the poet again writing from his college rooms, dwelling with boyish detail on his growth in height and reduction in girth, his late hours and heavy potations, his comrades, and the prospects of his book. From July to September he dates from London, excited by the praises of some now obscure magazine, and planning a journey to the Hebrides. In October he is again settled at Cambridge, and in a letter to Miss Pigot, makes a humorous reference to one of his fantastic freaks: "I have got a new friend, the finest in the world —a *tame bear*. When I brought him here, they asked me what I meant to do with him, and my reply was, 'He should sit for a fellowship.' This answer delighted them not." The greater part of the spring and summer of 1808 was spent at Dorant's Hotel, Albemarle Street. Left to himself, he seems during this period for the first time to have freely indulged in dissipations, which are in most lives more or less carefully concealed. But Byron, with almost unparalleled folly, was perpetually taking the public into his confidence, and all his "sins of blood," with the strange additions of an imaginative effrontery, have been thrust before us in a manner which even Théophile Gautier might have thought indelicate. Nature and circumstances conspired to the result. With passions which he is fond of comparing to the fires of Vesuvius and Hecla, he was, on his entrance into a social life which his rank helped to surround with temptations, unconscious of any sufficient motive for resisting them; he had no one to restrain him from the whim of the moment, or with sufficient authority to give him effective advice. A temperament of general despondency, relieved by reckless outbursts of animal spirits, is the least favourable to habitual

self-control. The melancholy of Byron was not of the pensive and innocent kind attributed to Cowley, rather that of the μελαγχολικοί of whom Aristotle asserts, with profound psychological or physiological intuition, that they are ἀεὶ ἐν σφοδρᾷ ὀρέξει. The absurdity of Mr. Moore's frequent declaration, that all great poets are inly wrapt in perpetual gloom, is only to be excused by the modesty which, in the saying so, obviously excludes himself from the list. But it is true that anomalous energies are sources of incessant irritation to their possessor, until they have found their proper vent in the free exercise of his highest faculties. Byron had not yet done this, when he was rushing about between London, Brighton, Cambridge, and Newstead—shooting, gambling, swimming, alternately drinking deep and trying to starve himself into elegance, green-room hunting, travelling with disguised companions,[1] patronizing D'Egville the dancing-master, Grimaldi the clown, and taking lessons from Mr. Jackson, the distinguished professor of pugilism, to whom he afterwards affectionately refers as his "old friend and corporeal pastor and master." There is no inducement to dwell on amours devoid of romance, further than to remember that they never trenched on what the common code of the fashionable world terms dishonour. We may believe the poet's later assertion, backed by want of evidence to the contrary, that he had never been the first means of leading any one astray—a fact perhaps worthy the atten-

[1] In reference to one of these, see an interesting letter from Mr. Minto to the *Athenæum* in the year 1876, in which, with considerable though not conclusive ingenuity, he endeavours to identify the girl with "Thyrza" and with "Astarté," whom he regards as the same person.

tion of those moral worshippers of Goethe and Burns who hiss at Lord Byron's name.

Though much of this year of his life was passed unprofitably, from it dates the impulse that provoked him to put forth his powers. The *Edinburgh*, with the attack on the *Hours of Idleness*, appeared in March, 1808. This production, by Lord Brougham, is a specimen of the tomahawk style of criticism prevalent in the early years of the century, in which the main motive of the critic was, not to deal fairly with his author, but to acquire for himself an easy reputation for cleverness, by a series of smart, contemptuous sentences. Taken separately, the strictures of the *Edinburgh* are sufficiently just, and the passages quoted for censure are all bad. Byron's genius as a poet was not remarkably precocious. The *Hours of Idleness* seldom rise, either in thought or expression, very far above the average level of juvenile verse; many of the pieces in the collection are weak imitations, or commonplace descriptions; others, suggested by circumstances of local or temporary interest, had served their turn before coming into print. Their prevailing sentiment is an affectation of misanthropy, conveyed in such lines as these:—

> "Weary of love, of life, devour'd with spleen,
> I rest, a perfect Timon, not nineteen."

This mawkish element unfortunately survives in much of the author's later verse. But even in this volume there are indications of force and command. The *Prayer of Nature* indeed, though previously written, was not included in the edition before the notice of the critic; but the sound of *Loch-na-Gair* and some of the stanzas on *Newstead* ought to have saved him from the mistake of

his impudent advice. The poet, who through life waited with feverish anxiety for every verdict on his work, is reported, after reading the review, to have looked like a man about to send a challenge. In the midst of a transparent show of indifference, he confesses to have drunk three bottles of claret on the evening of its appearance. But the wound did not mortify into torpor; the Sea-Kings' blood stood him in good stead, and he was not long in collecting his strength for the panther-like spring, which, gaining strength by its delay, twelve months later made it impossible for him to be contemned.

The last months of the year he spent at Newstead, vacated by the tenant, who had left the building in the tumble-down condition in which he found it. Byron was, by his own acknowledgment, at this time "heavily dipped," generosities having combined with selfish extravagances to the result; he had no funds to subject the place to anything like a thorough repair, but he busied himself in arranging a few of the rooms for his own present and his mother's after use. About this date he writes to her, beginning in his usual style, "Dear Madam," saying he has as yet no rooms ready for her reception, but that on his departure she shall be tenant till his return. During this interval he was studying Pope, and carefully maturing his own satire. In November the dog Boatswain died in a fit of madness. The event called forth the famous burst of misanthropic verse, ending with the couplet—

> "To mark a friend's remains these stones arise;
> I never knew but *one*, and *here* he lies;"—

and the inscription on the monument that still remains in the gardens of Newstead—

"Near this spot
Are deposited the remains of one
Who possessed Beauty without Vanity,
Strength without Insolence,
Courage without Ferocity,
And all the virtues of Man without his Vices.
This Praise, which would be unmeaning Flattery
If inscribed over human ashes,
Is but a just tribute to the Memory of
Boatswain, a Dog,
Who was born at Newfoundland, May, 1803,
And died at Newstead Abbey, November 18, 1808."

On January 22, 1809, his lordship's coming of age was celebrated with festivities, curtailed of their proportions by his limited means. Early in spring he paid a visit to London, bringing the proof of his satire to the publisher, Cawthorne. From St. James's Street he writes to Mrs. Byron, on the death of Lord Falkland, who had been killed in a duel, and expresses a sympathy for his family, left in destitute circumstances, whom he proceeded to relieve with a generosity only equalled by the delicacy of the manner in which it was shown. Referring to his own embarrassment, he proceeds in the expression of a resolve, often repeated, "Come what may, Newstead and I stand or fall together. I have now lived on the spot—I have fixed my heart on it; and no pressure, present or future, shall induce me to barter the last vestige of our inheritance." He was building false hopes on the result of the suit for the Rochdale property, which, being dragged from court to court, involved him in heavy expenses, with no satisfactory result. He took his seat in the House of Lords on the 13th of March, and Mr. Dallas, who accompanied him to the bar of the House, has left an account of his somewhat unfortunate demeanour.

"His countenance, paler than usual, showed that his mind was agitated, and that he was thinking of the nobleman to whom he had once looked for a hand and countenance in his introduction. There were very few persons in the House. Lord Eldon was going through some ordinary business. When Lord Byron had taken the oaths, the Chancellor quitted his seat, and went towards him with a smile, putting out his hand warmly to welcome him; and, though I did not catch the words, I saw that he paid him some compliment. This was all thrown away upon Lord Byron, who made a stiff bow, and put the tips of his fingers into the Chancellor's hand. The Chancellor did not press a welcome so received, but resumed his seat; while Lord Byron carelessly seated himself for a few minutes on one of the empty benches to the left of the throne, usually occupied by the lords in Opposition. When, on his joining me, I expressed what I had felt, he said, 'If I had shaken hands heartily, he would have set me down for one of his party; but I will have nothing to do with them on either side. I have taken my seat, and now I will go abroad.'"

A few days later the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* appeared before the public. The first anonymous edition was exhausted in a month; a second, to which the author gave his name, quickly followed. He was wont at a later date to disparage this production, and frequently recanted many of his verdicts in marginal notes. Several, indeed, seem to have been dictated by feelings so transitory, that in the course of the correction of proof blame was turned into praise, and praise into blame; *i.e.*, he wrote in MS. before he met the agreeable author—

"I leave topography to coxcomb Gell;"

we have his second thought in the first edition, before he saw the Troad—

> "I leave topography to classic Gell;"

and his third, half-way in censure, in the fifth—

> "I leave topography to rapid Gell."

Of such materials are literary judgments made!

The success of Byron's satire was due to the fact of its being the only good thing of its kind since Churchill—for in the *Baviad* and *Mæviad* only butterflies were broken upon the wheel—and to its being the first promise of a new power. The *Bards and Reviewers* also enlisted sympathy, from its vigorous attack upon the critics who had hitherto assumed the prerogative of attack. Jeffrey and Brougham were seethed in their own milk; and outsiders, whose credentials were still being examined, as Moore and Campbell, came in for their share of vigorous vituperation. The Lakers fared worst of all. It was the beginning of the author's life-long war, only once relaxed, with Southey. Wordsworth—though against this passage is written "unjust," a concession not much sooner made than withdrawn—is dubbed an idiot, who—

> "Both by precept and example shows,
> That prose is verse, and verse is only prose;"

and Coleridge, a baby—

> "To turgid ode and tumid stanza dear."

The lines ridiculing the encounter between Jeffrey and Moore are a fair specimen of the accuracy with which the author had caught the ring of Pope's antithesis:—

> "The surly Tolbooth scarcely kept her place.
> The Tolbooth felt—for marble sometimes can,
> On such occasions, feel as much as man—
> The Tolbooth felt defrauded of her charms,
> If Jeffrey died, except within her arms."

Meanwhile Byron had again retired to Newstead, where he invited some choice spirits to hold a few weeks of farewell revel. Matthews, one of these, gives an account of the place, and the time they spent there—entering the mansion between a bear and a wolf, amid a salvo of pistol-shots; sitting up to all hours, talking politics, philosophy, poetry; hearing stories of the dead lords, and the ghost of the Black Brother; drinking their wine out of the skull-cup which the owner had made out of the cranium of some old monk dug up in the garden; breakfasting at two, then reading, fencing, riding, cricketing, sailing on the lake, and playing with the bear or teasing the wolf. The party broke up without having made themselves responsible for any of the orgies of which Childe Harold raves, and which Dallas in good earnest accepts as veracious, when the poet and his friend Hobhouse started for Falmouth, on their way "*outre mer.*"

CHAPTER IV.

TWO YEARS OF TRAVEL.

THERE is no romance of Munchausen or Dumas more marvellous than the adventures attributed to Lord Byron abroad. Attached to his first expedition are a series of narratives, by professing eye-witnesses, of his intrigues, encounters, acts of diablerie and of munificence, in particular of his roaming about the isles of Greece and taking possession of one of them, which have all the same relation to reality as the *Arabian Nights* to the actual reign of Haroun Al Raschid.[1]

Byron had far more than an average share of the *émigré* spirit, the counterpoise in the English race of their otherwise arrogant isolation. He held with Wilhelm Meister—

> "To give space for wandering is it,
> That the earth was made so wide;"

and wrote to his mother from Athens: "I am so convinced of the advantages of looking at mankind, instead of reading about them, and the bitter effects of staying at home with all the narrow prejudices of an islander, that I think there should be a law amongst us to send our young men abroad for a term, among the few allies our wars have left us."

[1] Those who wish to read them are referred to the large three volumes—published in 1825, by Mr. Iley, Portman Square—of anonymous authorship.

On June 11th, having borrowed money at heavy interest, and stored his mind with information about Persia and India, the contemplated but unattained goal of his travels, he left London, accompanied by his friend Hobhouse, Fletcher his valet, Joe Murray his old butler, and Robert Rushton, the son of one of his tenants, supposed to be represented by the Page in *Childe Harold*. The two latter, the one on account of his age, the other from his health breaking down, he sent back to England from Gibraltar.

Becalmed for some days at Falmouth, a town which he describes as "full of Quakers and salt fish," he despatched letters to his mother, Drury, and Hodgson, exhibiting the changing moods of his mind. Smarting under a slight he had received at parting from a school-companion, who had excused himself from a farewell meeting on the plea that he had to go shopping, he at one moment talks of his desolation, and says that, "leaving England without regret," he has thought of entering the Turkish service; in the next, especially in the stanzas to Hodgson, he runs off into a strain of boisterous buffoonery. On the 2nd of July, the packet by which he was bound sailed for Lisbon, and arrived there about the middle of the month, when the English fleet was anchored in the Tagus. The poet in some of his stanzas has described the fine view of the port and the disconsolate dirtiness of the city itself, the streets of which were at that time rendered dangerous by the frequency of religious and political assassinations. Nothing else remains of his sojourn to interest us, save the statement of Mr. Hobhouse, that his friend made a more perilous, though less celebrated, achievement by water than his crossing the Hellespont, in swimming from old Lisbon to Belem Castle. Byron praises the neighbouring Cintra as "the most beautiful village in the world," though he

joins with Wordsworth in heaping anathemas on the Convention, and extols the grandeur of Mafra, the Escurial of Portugal, in the convent of which a monk, showing the traveller a large library, asked if the English had any books in their country. Despatching his baggage and servants by sea to Gibraltar, he and his friend started on horseback through the south-west of Spain. Their first resting-place, after a ride of 400 miles, performed at an average rate of seventy in the twenty-four hours, was Seville, where they lodged for three days in the house of two ladies, to whose attractions, as well as the fascination he seems to have exerted over them, the poet somewhat garrulously refers. Here, too, he saw, parading on the Prado, the famous *Maid of Saragossa*, whom he celebrates in his equally famous stanzas (*Childe Harold*, I., 54–58). Of Cadiz, the next stage, he writes with enthusiasm as a modern Cythera, describing the bull-fights in his verse, and the beauties in glowing prose. The belles of this city, he says, are the Lancashire witches of Spain; and by reason of them, rather than the sea-shore or the Sierra Morena, "sweet Cadiz is the first spot in the creation." Hence, by an English frigate, they sailed to Gibraltar, for which place he has nothing but curses. Byron had no sympathy with the ordinary forms of British patriotism, and in our great struggle with the tyranny of the First Empire, he may almost be said to have sympathized with Napoleon.

The ship stopped at Cagliari, in Sardinia, and again at Girgenti, on the Sicilian coast. Arriving at Malta, they halted there for three weeks—time enough to establish a sentimental, though Platonic, flirtation with Mrs. Spencer Smith, wife of our minister at Constantinople, sister-in-law of the famous admiral, and the heroine of some exciting adventures. She is the "Florence" of *Childe Harold*,

and is afterwards addressed in some of the most graceful verses of his cavalier minstrelsy—

"Do thou, amidst the fair white walls,
If Cadiz yet be free,
At times from out her latticed halls
Look o'er the dark blue sea—
Then think upon Calypso's isles,
Endear'd by days gone by—
To others give a thousand smiles,
To me a single sigh."

The only other adventure of the visit is Byron's quarrel with an officer, on some unrecorded ground, which Hobhouse tells us nearly resulted in a duel. The friends left Malta on September 29th, in the war-ship "Spider," and after anchoring off Patras, and spending a few hours on shore, they skirted the coast of Acarnania, in view of localities—as Ithaca, the Leucadian rock, and Actium—whose classic memories filtered through the poet's mind and found a place in his masterpieces. Landing at Previsa, they started on a tour through Albania—

"O'er many a mount sublime,
"Through lands scarce noticed in historic tales."

Byron was deeply impressed by the beauty of the scenery, and the half-savage independence of the people, described as "always strutting about with slow dignity, though in rags." In October we find him with his companions at Janina, hospitably entertained by order of Ali Pasha, the famous Albanian Turk, bandit, and despot, then engaged in besieging Ibrahim in Illyria. They proceeded on their way by "bleak Pindus," Acherusia's lake, and Zitza, with its monastery door battered by robbers. Before reaching the latter place they encountered a terrific thunder-storm,

in the midst of which they separated, and Byron's detachment lost its way for nine hours, during which he composed the verses to Florence, quoted above.

Some days later they together arrived at Tepelleni, and were there received by Ali Pasha in person. The scene on entering the town is described as recalling Scott's Branksome Castle and the feudal system; and the introduction to Ali, who sat for some of the traits of the poet's corsairs, is graphically reproduced in a letter to Mrs. Byron. "His first question was, why at so early an age I left my country, and without a 'lala,' or nurse? He then said the English minister had told him I was of a great family, and desired his respects to my mother, which I now present to you (date, November 12th). He said he was certain I was a man of birth, because I had small ears, curling hair, and little white hands. He told me to consider him as a father whilst I was in Turkey, and said he looked on me as his son. Indeed he treated me like a child, sending me almonds, fruit, and sweetmeats twenty times a day." Byron shortly afterwards discovered his host to be a poisoner and an assassin. "Two days ago," he proceeds, in a passage which illustrates his character and a common experience, "I was nearly lost in a Turkish ship-of-war, owing to the ignorance of the captain and crew. Fletcher yelled after his wife; the Greeks called on all the saints, the Mussulmen on Alla; the captain burst into tears and ran below deck, telling us to call on God. The sails were split, the mainyard shivered, the wind blowing fresh, the night setting in; and all our chance was to make for Corfu—or, as F. pathetically called it, 'a watery grave.' I did what I could to console him, but finding him incorrigible, wrapped myself in my Albanian capote, and lay down on the deck to wait the worst." Unable from his lameness,

says Hobhouse, to be of any assistance, he in a short time was found amid the trembling sailors fast asleep. They got back to the coast of Suli, and shortly afterwards started through Acarnania and Ætolia for the Morea, again rejoicing in the wild scenery and the apparently kindred spirits of the wild men among whom they passed. Byron was especially fascinated by the fire-light dance and song of the robber band, which he describes and reproduces in *Childe Harold*. On the 21st of November he reached Mesolonghi, where, fifteen years later, he died. Here he dismissed most of his escort, proceeded to Patras, and on to Vostizza, caught sight of Parnassus, and accepted a flight of eagles near Delphi as a favouring sign of Apollo. "The last bird," he writes, "I ever fired at was an eaglet on the shore of the Gulf of Lepanto. It was only wounded, and I tried to save it—the eye was so bright. But it pined and died in a few days; and I never did since, and never will, attempt the life of another bird." From Livadia the travellers proceeded to Thebes, visited the cave of Trophonius, Diana's fountain, the so-called ruins of Pindar's house, and the field of Cheronea, crossed Cithæron, and on Christmas, 1809, arrived before the defile, near the ruins of Phyle, where he had his first glimpse of Athens, which evoked the famous lines:—

> "Ancient of days, august Athena! where,
> Where are thy men of might? thy grand in soul?
> Gone, glimmering through the dreams of things that were.
> First in the race that led to glory's goal,
> They won, and pass'd away: is this the whole—
> A schoolboy's tale, the wonder of an hour?"

After which he reverts to his perpetually recurring moral, "Men come and go; but the hills, and waves, and skies, and stars endure"—

"Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds;
Still in his beam Mendeli's marbles glare;
Art, glory, freedom fail—but nature still is fair."

The duration of Lord Byron's first visit to Athens was about three months, and it was varied by excursions to different parts of Attica—Eleusis, Hymettus, Cape Colonna, Sunium, the scene of Falconer's shipwreck, the Colonos of Œdipus, and Marathon, the plain of which is said to have been placed at his disposal for about the same sum that thirty years later an American volunteered to give for the bark with his name on the tree at Newstead. Byron had a poor opinion of the modern Athenians, who seem to have at this period done their best to justify the Roman satirist. He found them superficial, cunning, and false; but, with generous historic insight, he says that no nation in like circumstances would have been much better; that they had the vices of ages of slavery, from which it would require ages of freedom to emancipate them.

In the Greek capital he lodged at the house of a respectable lady, widow of an English vice-consul, who had three daughters, the eldest of whom, Theresa, acquired an innocent and enviable fame as the Maid of Athens, without the dangerous glory of having taken any very firm hold of the heart that she was asked to return. A more solid passion was the poet's genuine indignation on the "lifting," in Border phrase, of the marbles from the Parthenon, and their being taken to England by order of Lord Elgin. Byron never wrote anything more sincere than the *Curse of Minerva;* and he has recorded few incidents more pathetic than that of the old Greek who, when the last stone was removed for exportation, shed tears and said "τέλος!" The question is still an open

one of ethics. There are few Englishmen of the higher rank who do not hold London in the right hand as barely balanced by the rest of the world in the left; a judgment in which we can hardly expect Romans, Parisians, and Athenians to concur. On the other hand, the marbles were mouldering at Athens, and they are preserved, like ginger, in the British Museum.

Among the adventures of this period are an expedition across the Ilissus to some caves near Kharyati, in which the travellers were by accident nearly entombed; another to Pentelicus, where they tried to carve their names on the marble rock; and a third to the environs of the Piræus in the evening light. Early in March the convenient departure of an English sloop-of-war induced them to make an excursion to Smyrna. There, on the 28th of March, the second canto of *Childe Harold*, begun in the previous autumn at Janina, was completed. They remained in the neighbourhood, visiting Ephesus, without poetical result further than a reference to the jackals, in the *Siege of Corinth;* and on April 11th left by the "Salsette," a frigate on its way to Constantinople. The vessel touched at the Troad, and Byron spent some time on land, snipe-shooting, and rambling among the reputed ruins of Ilium. The poet characteristically, in *Don Juan* and elsewhere, attacks the sceptics, and then half ridicules the belief.

> "I've stood upon Achilles' tomb,
> And heard Troy doubted! Time will doubt of Rome!
> * * * * * *
> There, on the green and village-cotted hill, is,
> Flank'd by the Hellespont, and by the sea,
> Entomb'd the bravest of the brave Achilles.—
> They say so: Bryant says the contrary."

Being again detained in the Dardanelles, waiting for a fair wind, Byron landed on the European side, and swam, in company with Lieutenant Ekenhead, from Sestos to Abydos—a performance of which he boasts some twenty times. The strength of the current is the main difficulty of a feat, since so surpassed as to have passed from notice; but it was a tempting theme for classical allusions. At length, on May 14, he reached Constantinople, exalted the Golden Horn above all the sights he had seen, and now first abandoned his design of travelling to Persia. Galt, and other more or less gossipping travellers, have accumulated a number of incidents of the poet's life at this period, of his fanciful dress, blazing in scarlet and gold, and of his sometimes absurd contentions for the privileges of rank—as when he demanded precedence of the English ambassador in an interview with the Sultan, and, on its refusal, could only be pacified by the assurances of the Austrian internuncio. In converse with indifferent persons he displayed a curious alternation of frankness and hauteur, and indulged a habit of letting people up and down, by which he frequently gave offence. More interesting are narratives of the suggestion of some of his verses, as the slave-market in *Don Juan*, and the spectacle of the dead criminal tossed on the waves, revived in the *Bride of Abydos*. One example is, if we except Dante's *Ugolino*, the most remarkable instance in literature of the expansion, without the weakening, of the horrible. Take first Mr. Hobhouse's plain prose: "The sensations produced by the state of the weather"—it was wretched and stormy when they left the "Salsette" for the city—"and leaving a comfortable cabin, were in unison with the impressions which we felt when, passing under the palace of the Sultans, and gazing at the gloomy

cypress which rises above the walls, we saw two dogs gnawing a dead body." After this we may measure the almost fiendish force of a morbid imagination brooding over the incident—

"And he saw the lean dogs beneath the wall
Hold o'er the dead their carnival:
Gorging and growling o'er carcass and limb,
They were too busy to bark at him.
From a Tartar's skull they had stripp'd the flesh,
As ye peel the fig when its fruit is fresh;
And their white tusks crunched on the whiter skull,
As it slipp'd through their jaws when their edge grew dull."

No one ever more persistently converted the incidents of travel into poetic material; but sometimes, in doing so, he borrowed more largely from his imagination than his memory, as in the description of the seraglio, of which there is reason to doubt his having seen more than the entrance.

Byron and Hobhouse set sail from Constantinople on the 14th July, 1810—the latter to return direct to England, a determination which, from no apparent fault on either side, the former did not regret. One incident of the passage derives interest from its possible consequence. Taking up, and unsheathing, a yataghan which he found on the quarter-deck, he remarked, "I should like to know how a person feels after committing a murder." This harmless piece of melodrama—the idea of which is expanded in Mr. Dobell's *Balder*, and parodied in *Firmilian*—may have been the basis of a report afterwards circulated, and accepted among others by Goethe, that his lordship had committed a murder; hence, obviously, the character of *Lara*, and the mystery of *Manfred!* The poet parted from his friend at Zea (Ceos); after spending some time in solitude on the little island, he returned to Athens,

and there renewed acquaintance with his school friend, the Marquis of Sligo, who after a few days accompanied him to Corinth. They then separated, and Byron went on to Patras, in the Morea, where he had business with the Consul. He dates from there at the close of July. It is impossible to give a consecutive account of his life during the next ten months, a period consequently filled up with the contradictory and absurd mass of legends before referred to. A few facts only of any interest are extricable. During at least half of the time his head-quarters were at Athens, where he again met his friend the Marquis, associated with the English Consul and Lady Hester Stanhope, studied Romaic in a Franciscan monastery—where he saw and conversed with a motley crew of French, Italians, Danes, Greeks, Turks, and Americans—wrote to his mother and others, saying he had swum from Sestos to Abydos, was sick of Fletcher bawling for beef and beer, had done with authorship, and hoped, on his return, to lead a quiet recluse life. He nevertheless made notes to *Harold*, composed the *Hints from Horace* and the *Curse of Minerva*, and presumably brooded over, and outlined in his mind, many of his verse romances. We hear no more of the *Maid of Athens;* but there is no fair ground to doubt that the *Giaour* was suggested by his rescue of a young woman whom, for the fault of an amour with some Frank, a party of Janissaries were about to throw, sewn up in a sack, into the sea. Mr. Galt gives no authority for his statement, that the girl's deliverer was the original cause of her sentence. We may rest assured that if it had been so, Byron himself would have told us of it.

A note to the *Siege of Corinth* is suggestive of his unequalled restlessness. "I visited all three—Tripolitza, Napoli, and Argos—in 1810–11; and in the course of

journeying through the country, from my first arrival in 1809, crossed the Isthmus eight times on my way from Attica to the Morea. In the latter locality we find him, during the autumn, the honoured guest of the Vizier Valhi (a son of Ali Pasha), who presented him with a fine horse. During a second visit to Patras, in September, he was attacked by the same sort of marsh fever from which, fourteen years afterwards, in the near neighbourhood, he died. On his recovery, in October, he complains of having been nearly killed by the heroic measures of the native doctors: "One of them trusts to his genius, never having studied; the other, to a campaign of eighteen months *against* the sick of Otranto, which he made in his youth with great effect. When I was seized with my disorder, I protested against both these assassins, but in vain." He was saved by the zeal of his servants, who asseverated that if his lordship died they would take good care the doctors should also; on which the learned men discontinued their visits, and the patient revived. On his final return to Athens, the restoration of his health was retarded by one of his long courses of reducing diet; he lived mainly on rice, and vinegar and water. From that city he writes in the early spring, intimating his intention of proceeding to Egypt; but Mr. Hanson, his man of business, ceasing to send him remittances, the scheme was abandoned. Beset by letters about his debts, he again declares his determination to hold fast by Newstead, adding that if the place, which is his only tie to England, is sold, he won't come back at all. Life on the shores of the Archipelago is far cheaper and happier, and "Ubi bene ibi patria," for such a citizen of the world as he has become. Later he went to Malta, and was detained there by another bad attack of tertian fever. The next record of consequence is

from the "Volage" frigate, at sea, June 29, 1811, when he writes in a despondent strain to Hodgson, that he is returning home "without a hope, and almost without a desire," to wrangle with creditors and lawyers about executions and coal-pits. "In short, I am sick and sorry; and when I have a little repaired my irreparable affairs, away I shall march, either to campaign in Spain, or back again to the East, where I can at least have cloudless skies and a cessation from impertinence. I am sick of fops, and poesy, and prate, and shall leave the whole Castalian state to Bufo, or anybody else. Howbeit, I have written some 4000 lines, of one kind or another, on my travels." With these, and a collection of marbles, and skulls, and hemlock, and tortoises, and servants, he reached London about the middle of July, and remained there, making some arrangements about business and publication. On the 23rd we have a short but kind letter to his mother, promising to pay her a visit on his way to Rochdale. "You know you are a vixen, but keep some champagne for me," he had written from abroad. On receipt of the letter she remarked, "If I should be dead before he comes down, what a strange thing it would be." Towards the close of the month she had an attack so alarming that he was summoned; but before he had time to arrive she had expired, on the 1st of August, in a fit of rage brought on by reading an upholsterer's bill. On the way Byron heard the intelligence, and wrote to Dr. Pigot: "I now feel the truth of Mrs. Gray's observation, that we can only have *one* mother. Peace be with her!" On arriving at Newstead, all their storms forgotten, the son was so affected that he did not trust himself to go to the funeral, but stood dreamily gazing at the cortége from the gate of the Abbey. Five days later, Charles S. Matthews was drowned.

CHAPTER V.

SECOND PERIOD OF AUTHORSHIP.—LIFE IN LONDON.—CORRESPONDENCE WITH SCOTT.

The deaths of Long, Wingfield, Eddlestone, Matthews, and of his mother had narrowed the circle of the poet's early companions; and, though he talks of each loss in succession as if it had been that of an only friend, we can credit a degree of loneliness, and excuse a certain amount of bitterness in the feelings with which he returned to London. He had at this time seen very little of the only relative whom he ever deeply loved. He and his half-sister met casually in 1804, and again in the following year. After her marriage (1807), Byron writes from abroad (1810), regretting having distressed her by his quarrel with Lord Carlisle. In 1811 she is mentioned as reversionary heiress of his estate. Towards the close of 1813, there are two allusions which testify to their mutual affection. Next we come to the interesting series of letters of 1815–16, published with the Memoir of Mr. Hodgson, to whom, along with Hobhouse and Scrope Davies, his lordship, in a will and codicil, leaves the management of his property. Harness appears frequently at this period among his surviving intimates: to this list there was shortly added another. In speaking of his *Bards and Reviewers*, the author makes occasional reference to the possibility of his being called to account for some of his

attacks. His expectation was realized by a letter from the poet Moore, dated Dublin, January 1, 1810, couched in peremptory terms, demanding to know if his lordship avowed the authorship of the insults contained in the poem. This letter, being entrusted to Mr. Hodgson, was not forwarded to Byron abroad; but shortly after his return, he received another in more conciliatory terms, renewing the complaint. To this he replied, in a stiff but manly letter, that he had never meant to insult Mr. Moore; but that he was, if necessary, ready to give him satisfaction. Moore accepting the explanation, somewhat querulously complained of his advances to friendship not being received. Byron again replied that, much as he would feel honoured by Mr. Moore's acquaintance, he being practically threatened by the irate Irishman, could hardly make the first advances. This called forth a sort of apology; the correspondents met at the house of Mr. Rogers, and out of the somewhat awkward circumstances, owing to the frankness of the "noble author," as the other ever after delights to call him, arose the life-long intimacy which had such various and lasting results. Moore has been called a false friend to Byron, and a traitor to his memory. The judgment is somewhat harsh, but the association between them was unfortunate. Thomas Moore had some sterling qualities. His best satirical pieces are inspired by a real indignation, and lit up by a genuine humour. He was also an exquisite musician in words, and must have been occasionally a fascinating companion. But he was essentially a worldling, and, as such, a superficial critic. He encouraged the shallow affectations of his great friend's weaker work, and recoiled in alarm before the daring defiance of his stronger. His criticisms on all Byron wrote and felt seriously on religion are almost worthy of a con-

venticle. His letters to others on *Manfred*, and *Cain*, and *Don Juan* are the expression of sentiments which he had never the courage to state explicitly to the author. On the other hand, Byron was attracted beyond reasonable measure by his gracefully deferential manners, paid too much regard to his opinions, and overestimated his genius. For the subsequent destruction of the memoirs, urged by Mr. Hobhouse and Mrs. Leigh, he was not wholly responsible; though a braver man, having accepted the position of his lordship's literary legatee, with the express understanding that he would see to the fulfilment of the wishes of his dead friend, would have to the utmost resisted their total frustration.

Meanwhile, on landing in England, the poet had placed in the hands of Mr. Dallas the *Hints from Horace*, which he intended to have brought out by the publisher Cawthorne. Of this performance—an inferior edition, relieved by a few strong touches of the *Bards and Reviewers*—Dallas ventured to express his disapproval. "Have you no other result of your travels?" he asked; and got for answer, "A few short pieces, and a lot of Spenserian stanzas; not worth troubling you with, but you are welcome to them." Dallas took the remark literally, saw they were a safe success, and assumed to himself the merit of the discovery, the risks, and the profits. It is the converse of the story of Gabriel Harvey and the *Faery Queene*. The first two cantos of *Childe Harold* bear no comparison with the legend of *Una and the Red Cross Knight;* but there was no mistake about their proof of power, their novelty, and adaptation to a public taste as yet unjaded by eloquent and imaginative descriptions of foreign scenery, manners, and climates.

The poem—after being submitted to Gifford, in defiance

of the protestations of the author, who feared that the reference might seem to seek the favour of the august *Quarterly*—was accepted by Mr. Murray, and proceeded through the press, subject to change and additions, during the next five months. The *Hints from Horace*, fortunately postponed and then suspended, appeared posthumously in 1831. Byron remained at Newstead till the close of October, negotiating with creditors and lawyers, and engaged in a correspondence about his publications, in the course of which he deprecates any identification of himself and his hero, though he had at first called him Childe Byron. "Instruct Mr. Murray," he entreats, "not to call the work 'Child of Harrow's Pilgrimage,' as he has done to some of my astonished friends, who wrote to inquire after my *sanity*, as well they might." At the end of the month we find him in London, again indulging in a voyage in "the ship of fools," in which Moore claims to have accompanied him; but at the same time exhibiting remarkable shrewdness in reference to the affairs of his household. In February, 1812, he again declares to Hodgson his resolve to leave England for ever, and fix himself in "one of the fairest islands of the East." On the 27th he made in the House of Lords his speech on a Bill to introduce special penalties against the frame-breakers of Nottingham. This effort, on which he received many compliments, led among other results to a friendly correspondence with Lord Holland. On April 21 of the same year he again addressed the House on behalf of Roman Catholic Emancipation; and in June, 1813, in favour of Major Cartwright's petition. On all these occasions, as afterwards on the continent, Byron espoused the Liberal side of politics. But his rôle was that of Manlius or Cæsar, and he never fails to remind us that he himself was *for*

the people, not *of* them. His latter speeches, owing partly to his delivery, blamed as too Asiatic, were less successful. To a reader the three seem much on the same level. They are clever, but evidently set performances, and leave us no ground to suppose that the poet's abandonment of a parliamentary career was a serious loss to the nation.

On the 29th of February the first and second cantos of *Childe Harold* appeared. An early copy was sent to Mrs. Leigh, with the inscription: "To Augusta, my dearest sister and my best friend, who has ever loved me much better than I deserved, this volume is presented by her father's son and most affectionate brother, B." The book ran through seven editions in four weeks. The effect of the first edition of Burns, and the sale of Scott's *Lays*, are the only parallels in modern poetic literature to this success. All eyes were suddenly fastened on the author, who let his satire sleep, and threw politics aside, to be the romancer of his day, and for two years the darling of society. Previous to the publication, Mr. Moore confesses to have gratified his lordship with the expression of the fear that *Childe Harold* was too good for the age. Its success was due to the reverse being the truth. It was just on the level of its age. Its flowing verse, defaced by rhythmical faults perceptible only to finer ears, its prevailing sentiment, occasional boldness relieved by pleasing platitudes, its half affected rakishness, here and there elevated by a rush as of morning air, and its frequent richness—not yet, as afterwards, splendour—of description, were all appreciated by the fashionable London of the Regency; while the comparatively mild satire, not keen enough to scarify, only gave a more piquant flavour to the whole. Byron's genius, yet in the green leaf, was not too far above the clever masses of pleasure-loving manhood by which it

was surrounded. It was natural that the address on the reopening of Drury Lane Theatre should be written by "the world's new joy"—the first great English poet-peer; as natural as that in his only published satire of the period he should inveigh against almost the only amusement in which he could not share. The address was written at the request of Lord Holland, when of some hundred competitive pieces none had been found exactly suitable—a circumstance which gave rise to the famous parodies entitled *The Rejected Addresses*—and it was thought that the ultimate choice would conciliate all rivalry. The care which Byron bestowed on the correction of the first draft of this piece is characteristic of his habit of writing off his poems at a gush, and afterwards carefully elaborating them.

The Waltz was published anonymously in April, 1813. It was followed in May by the *Giaour*, the first of the flood of verse romances which, during the three succeeding years, he poured forth with impetuous fluency, and which were received with almost unrestrained applause. The plots and sentiments and imagery are similar in them all. The Giaour steals the mistress of Hassan, who revenges his honour by drowning her. The Giaour escapes; returns, kills Hassan, and then goes to a monastery. In the *Bride of Abydos*, published in the December of the same year, Giaffir wants to marry his daughter Zuleika to Carasman Pasha. She runs off with Selim, her reputed brother—in reality her cousin, and so at last her legitimate lover. They are caught; he is slain in fight; she dies, to slow music. In the *Corsair*, published January, 1814, Conrad, a pirate, and man of "one virtue and a thousand crimes!" is beloved by Medora, who, on his predatory expeditions, sits waiting for him (like Hassan's

and Sisera's mother) in a tower. On one of these he attacks Seyd Pasha, and is overborne by superior force; but Gulnare, a female slave of Seyd, kills her master, and runs off with Conrad, who finds Medora dead and vanishes. In *Lara*, the sequel to this—written in May and June, published in August—a man of mystery appears in the Morea, with a page, Kaled. After adventures worthy of Mrs. Radcliffe—from whose Schledoni the Giaour is said to have been drawn—Lara falls in battle with his deadly foe, Ezzelin, and turns out to be Conrad, while Kaled is of course Gulnare. The *Hebrew Melodies*, written in December, 1814, are interesting, in connexion with the author's early familiarity with the Old Testament, and from the force and music that mark the best of them; but they can hardly be considered an important contribution to the devotional verse of England. The *Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina*, composed after his marriage in the summer and autumn of 1815, appeared in the following year. The former is founded on the siege of the city, when the Turks took it from Menotti; but our attention is concentrated on Alp the renegade, another sketch from the same protoplastic ruffian, who leads on the Turks, is in love with the daughter of the governor of the city, tries to save her, but dies. The poem is frequently vigorous, but it ends badly. *Parisina*, though unequal, is on the whole a poem of a higher order than the others of the period. The trial scene exhibits some dramatic power, and the shriek of the lady mingling with Ugo's funeral dirge lingers in our ears, along with the convent bells—

> "In the grey square turret swinging,
> With a deep sound, to and fro,
> Heavily to the heart they go."

These romances belong to the same period of the author's poetic career as the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*. They followed one another like brilliant fireworks. They all exhibit a command of words, a sense of melody, and a flow of rhythm and rhyme, which mastered Moore and even Scott on their own ground. None of them are wanting in passages, as "He that hath bent him o'er the dead," and the description of Alp leaning against a column, which strike deeper than any verse of either of those writers. But there is an air of melodrama in them all. Harmonious delights of novel readers, they will not stand against the winnowing wind of deliberate criticism. They harp on the same string without the variations of a Paganini. They are potentially endless reproductions of one phase of an ill-regulated mind—the picture of the same quasi-melancholy vengeful man, who knows no friend but a dog, and reads on the tombs of the great only "the glory and the nothing of a name," the exile who cannot flee from himself, "the wandering outlaw of his own dark mind," who has not loved the world nor the world him—

> "Whose heart was form'd for softness, warp'd by wrong,
> Betray'd too early, and beguiled too long"—

all this, *decies repetita*, grows into a weariness and vexation. Mr. Carlyle harshly compares it to the screaming of a meat-jack. The reviewers and the public of the time thought differently. Jeffrey, penitent for the early *faux pas* of his *Review*, as Byron remained penitent for his answering assault, writes of *Lara*, "Passages of it may be put into competition with anything that poetry has produced in point either of pathos or energy." Moore—who afterwards wrote, not to Byron, that seven devils had entered into *Manfred*—professes himself "enraptured with

it." Fourteen thousand copies of the *Corsair* were sold in a day. But hear the author's own half-boast, half-apology: "*Lara* I wrote while undressing after coming home from balls and masquerades, in the year of revelry 1814. The *Bride* was written in four, the *Corsair* in ten days. This I take to be a humiliating confession, as it proves my own want of judgment in publishing, and the public's in reading, things which cannot have stamina for permanence."

The pecuniary profits accruing to Byron from his works began with *Lara*, for which he received 700*l.* He had made over to Mr. Dallas, besides other gifts to the same ungrateful recipient, the profits of *Harold*, amounting to 600*l.*, and of the *Corsair*, which brought 525*l.* The proceeds of the *Giaour* and the *Bride* were also surrendered.

During this period, 1813–1816, he had become familiar with all the phases of London society, "tasted their pleasures," and, towards the close, "felt their decay." His associates in those years were of two classes—men of the world, and authors. Fêted and courted in all quarters, he patronized the theatres, became in 1815 a member of the Drury Lane Committee, "liked the dandies," including Beau Brummell, and was introduced to the Regent. Their interview, in June, 1812, in the course of which the latter paid unrestrained compliments to *Harold* and the poetry of Scott, is naively referred to by Mr. Moore "as reflecting even still more honour on the Sovereign himself than on the two poets." Byron, in a different spirit, writes to Lord Holland: "I have now great hope, in the event of Mr. Pye's decease, of warbling truth at Court, like Mr. Mallet of indifferent memory. Consider, one hundred marks a year! besides the wine and the disgrace." We can hardly conceive the future author of the *Vision of*

Judgment writing odes to dictation. He does not seem to have been much fascinated with the first gentleman of Europe, whom at no distant date he assailed in the terrible "Avatar," and left the laureateship to Mr. Southey.

Among leaders in art and letters he was brought into more or less intimate contact with Sir Humphry Davy, the Edgeworths, Sir James Mackintosh, Colman the dramatic author, the elder Kean, Monk Lewis, Grattan, Curran, and Madame de Staël. Of the meeting of the last two he remarks, "It was like the confluence of the Rhone and the Sâone, and they were both so ugly that I could not help wondering how the best intellects of France and Ireland could have taken up respectively such residences."

About this time a communication from Mr. Murray, in reference to the meeting with the Regent, led to a letter from Sir Walter Scott to Lord Byron, the beginning of a life-long friendship, and one of the most pleasing pages of biography. These two great men were for a season perpetually pitted against one another as the foremost competitors for literary favour. When *Rokeby* came out, contemporaneously with the *Giaour*, the undergraduates of Oxford and Cambridge ran races to catch the first copies, and laid bets as to which of the rivals would win. During the anti-Byronic fever of 1840–1860 they were perpetually contrasted as the representatives of the manly and the morbid schools. A later sentimentalism has affected to despise the work of both. The fact, therefore, that from an early period the men themselves knew each other as they were is worth illustrating.

Scott's letter, in which a generous recognition of the pleasure he had derived from the work of the English poet, was followed by a manly remonstrance on the subject of the attack in the *Bards and Reviewers*, drew from

Byron in the following month (July, 1812) an answer in the same strain, descanting on the Prince's praises of the *Lay* and *Marmion*, and candidly apologizing for the "evil works of his nonage." "This satire," he remarks, "was written when I was very young and very angry, and fully bent on displaying my wrath and my wit; and now I am haunted by the ghosts of my wholesale assertions." This, in turn, called forth another letter to Byron, eager for more of his verses, with a cordial invitation to Abbotsford on the ground of Scotland's maternal claim on him, and asking for information about Pegasus and Parnassus. After this the correspondence continues with greater freedom, and the same display on either side of mutual respect. When Scott says, "the *Giaour* is praised among our mountains," and Byron returns, "*Waverley* is the best novel I have read," there is no suspicion of flattery—it is the interchange of compliments between men,

"Et cantare pares et respondere parati."

They talk in just the same manner to third parties. "I gave over writing romances," says the elder, in the spirit of a great-hearted gentleman, "because Byron beat me. He hits the mark where I don't even pretend to fledge my arrow. He has access to a stream of sentiment unknown to me." The younger, on the other hand, deprecates the comparisons that were being invidiously drawn between them. He presents his copy of the *Giaour* to Scott, with the phrase, "To the monarch of Parnassus," and compares the feeling of those who cavilled at his fame to that of the Athenians towards Aristides. From those sentiments he never swerves, recognizing to the last the breadth of character of the most generous of his critics, and referring to him, during his later years in Italy, as the Wizard and

the Ariosto of the North. A meeting was at length arranged between them. Scott looked forward to it with anxious interest, humorously remarking that Byron should say—

"Art thou the man whom men famed Grissell call?"

And he reply—

"Art thou the still more famed Tom Thumb the small?"

They met in London during the spring of 1815. The following sentences are from Sir Walter's account of it: "Report had prepared me to meet a man of peculiar habits and quick temper, and I had some doubts whether we were likely to suit each other in society. I was most agreeably disappointed in this respect. I found Lord Byron in the highest degree courteous, and even kind. We met for an hour or two almost daily in Mr. Murray's drawing-room, and found a great deal to say to each other. Our sentiments agreed a good deal, except upon the subjects of religion and politics, upon neither of which I was inclined to believe that Lord Byron entertained very fixed opinions. On politics he used sometimes to express a high strain of what is now called Liberalism; but it appeared to me that the pleasure it afforded him as a vehicle of displaying his wit and satire against individuals in office was at the bottom of this habit of thinking. At heart, I would have termed Byron a patrician on principle. His reading did not seem to me to have been very extensive. I remember repeating to him the fine poem of Hardyknute, and some one asked me what I could possibly have been telling Byron by which he was so much agitated. I saw him for the last time in (September) 1815, after I returned from France; he dined or lunched with me at Long's in Bond Street. I never saw him so full of gaiety and

good humour. The day of this interview was the most interesting I ever spent. Several letters passed between us—one perhaps every half year. Like the old heroes in Homer, we exchanged gifts; I gave Byron a beautiful dagger mounted with gold, which had been the property of the redoubted Elfi Bey. But I was to play the part of Diomed in the *Iliad*, for Byron sent me, some time after, a large sepulchral vase of silver, full of dead men's bones, found within the land walls of Athens. He was often melancholy, almost gloomy. When I observed him in this humour I used either to wait till it went off of its own accord, or till some natural and easy mode occurred of leading him into conversation, when the shadows almost always left his countenance, like the mist arising from a landscape. I think I also remarked in his temper starts of suspicion, when he seemed to pause and consider whether there had not been a secret and perhaps offensive meaning in something that was said to him. In this case I also judged it best to let his mind, like a troubled spring, work itself clear, which it did in a minute or two. A downright steadiness of manner was the way to his good opinion. Will Rose, looking by accident at his feet, saw him scowling furiously; but on his showing no consciousness, his lordship resumed his easy manner. What I liked about him, besides his boundless genius, was his generosity of spirit as well as of purse, and his utter contempt of all the affectations of literature. He liked Moore and me because, with all our other differences, we were both good-natured fellows, not caring to maintain our dignity, enjoying the *mot-pour-rire*. He wrote from impulse, never from effort, and therefore I have always reckoned Burns and Byron the most genuine poetic geniuses of my time, and of half a century before me. We

have many men of high poetic talents, but none of that ever-gushing and perennial fountain of natural waters."

Scott, like all hale men of sound sense, regretted the almost fatal incontinence which, in the year of his greatest private troubles, led his friend to make a parade of them before the public. He speaks more than once of his unhappy tendency to exhibit himself as the dying gladiator, and even compares him to his peacock, screeching before his window because he chooses to bivouac apart from his mate; but he read a copy of the Ravenna diary without altering his view that his lordship was his own worst maligner. Scott, says Lockhart, considered Byron the only poet of transcendent talents we had had since Dryden. There is preserved a curious record of his meeting with a greater poet than Dryden, but one whose greatness neither he nor Scott suspected. Mr. Crabbe Robinson reports Wordsworth to have said, in Charles Lamb's chambers, about the year 1808, "These reviewers put me out of patience. Here is a young man who has written a volume of poetry; and these fellows, just because he is a lord, set upon him. The young man will do something, if he goes on as he has begun. But these reviewers seem to think that nobody may write poetry unless he lives in a garret." Years after, Lady Byron, on being told this, exclaimed, "Ah, if Byron had known that, he would never have attacked Wordsworth. He went one day to meet him at dinner, and I said, 'Well, how did the young poet get on with the old one?' 'Why, to tell the truth,' said he, 'I had but one feeling from the beginning of the visit to the end, and that was *reverence*.'" Similarly, he began by being on good terms with Southey, and after a meeting at Holland House, wrote enthusiastically of his prepossessing appearance.

Byron and the leaders of the so-called Lake School were, at starting, common heirs of the revolutionary spirit; they were, either in their social views or personal feelings, to a large extent influenced by the most morbid, though in some respects the most magnetic, genius of modern France, J. J. Rousseau; but their temperaments were in many respects fundamentally diverse; and the pre-established discord between them ere long began to make itself manifest in their following out widely divergent paths. Wordsworth's return to nature had been preluded by Cowper; that of Byron by Burns. The revival of the one ripened into a restoration of simpler manners and old beliefs; the other was the spirit of the storm. When they had both become recognized powers, neither appreciated the work of the other. A few years after this date Byron wrote of Wordsworth, to a common admirer of both: "I take leave to differ from you as freely as I once agreed with you. His performances, since the *Lyrical Ballads*, are miserably inadequate to the ability that lurks within him. There is, undoubtedly, much natural talent spilt over the *Excursion;* but it is rain upon rocks, where it stands and stagnates; or rain upon sand, where it falls without fertilizing." This criticism, with others in like strain, was addressed to Mr. Leigh Hunt, to whom, in 1812, when enduring for radicalism's sake a very comfortable incarceration, Byron had, in company with Moore, paid a courteous visit.

Of the correspondence of this period—flippant, trenchant, or sparkling—few portions are more calculated to excite a smile than the record of his frequent resolutions made, reasseverated, and broken, to have done with literature; even going the length on some occasions of threatening to suppress his works, and, if possible, recall the ex-

isting copies. He affected being a man of the world unmercifully, and had a real delight in clever companions who assumed the same rôle. Frequent allusion is made to his intercourse with Erskine and Sheridan; the latter he is never tired of praising, as "the author of the best modern comedy (*School for Scandal*), the best farce (*The Critic*), and the best oration (the famous Begum speech) ever heard in this country." They spent many an evening together, and probably cracked many a bottle. It is Byron who tells the story of Sheridan being found in a gutter in a sadly incapable state; and, on some one asking "Who is this?" stammering out "Wilberforce." On one occasion he speaks of coming out of a tavern with the dramatist, when they both found the staircase in a very corkscrew condition; and elsewhere, of encountering a Mr. C——, who "had no notion of meeting with a bon-vivant in a scribbler," and summed the poet's eulogy with the phrase, "he drinks like a man." Hunt, the tattler, who observed his lordship's habits in Italy, with the microscope of malice ensconced within the same walls, makes it a charge against his host that he would not drink like a man. Once for all it may be noted, that although there was no kind of excess in which Byron, whether from bravado or inclination, failed occasionally to indulge, he was never for any stretch of time given over, like Burns, to what is technically termed intemperance. His head does not seem to have been strong, and under the influence of stimulants he may have been led to talk a great deal of his dangerous nonsense. But though he could not say, with Wordsworth, that only once, at Cambridge, had his brain been "excited by the fumes of wine," his prevailing sins were in other directions.

CHAPTER VI.

MARRIAGE, AND FAREWELL TO ENGLAND.

"As for poets," says Scott, "I have seen all the best of my time and country, and, though Burns had the most glorious eye imaginable, I never thought any of them would come up to an artist's notion of the character, except Byron. His countenance is a thing to dream of." Coleridge writes to the same effect, in language even stronger. We have from all sides similar testimony to the personal beauty which led the unhappiest of his devotees to exclaim, "That pale face is my fate!"

Southern critics, as De Chasles, Castelar, even Mazzini, have dealt leniently with the poet's relations to the other sex; and Elze extends to him in this regard the same excessive stretch of charity. "Dear Childe Harold," exclaims the German professor, "was positively besieged by women. They have, in truth, no right to complain of him: from his childhood he had seen them on their worst side." It is the casuistry of hero-worship to deny that Byron was unjust to women, not merely in isolated instances, but in his prevailing views of their character and claims. "I regard them," he says, in a passage only distinguished from others by more extravagant petulance, "as very pretty but inferior creatures, who are as little in their place at our tables as they would be in our council chambers. The whole of the present system with regard to the

female sex is a remnant of the barbarism of the chivalry of our forefathers. I look on them as grown-up children; but, like a foolish mamma, I am constantly the slave of one of them. The Turks shut up their women, and are much happier; give a woman a looking-glass and burnt almonds, and she will be content."

In contrast with this, we have the moods in which he drew his pictures of Angiolina, and Haidee, and Aurora Raby, and wrote the invocations to the shade of Astarte, and his letters in prose and verse to Augusta; but the above passage could never have been written by Chaucer, or Spenser, or Shakspeare, or Shelley. The class whom he was reviling seemed, however, during "the day of his destiny," bent on confirming his judgment by the blindness of their worship. His rank and fame, the glittering splendour of his verse, the romance of his travels, his picturesque melancholy and affectation of mysterious secrets, combined with the magic of his presence to bewitch and bewilder them. The dissenting malcontents, condemned as prudes and blues, had their revenge. Generally, we may say that women who had not written books adored Byron; women who had written or were writing books distrusted, disliked, and made him a moral to adorn their tales, often to point their fables with. He was by the one set caressed and spoilt, and "beguiled too long;" by the other, "betrayed too late." The recent memoirs of Frances Ann Kemble present a curious record of the process of passing from one extreme to the other. She dwells on the fascination exerted over her mind by the first reading of his poetry, and tells how she "fastened on the book with a grip like steel," and carried it off and hid it under her pillow; how it affected her "like an evil potion," and stirred her whole being with a tempest of

excitement, till finally she, with equal weakness, flung it aside, "resolved to read that grand poetry no more, and broke through the thraldom of that powerful spell." The confession brings before us a type of the transitions of the century, on its way from the Byronic to the anti-Byronic fever, of which later state Mrs. Jamieson, Mrs. Norton, and Miss Martineau are among the most pronounced representatives.

Byron's garrulity with regard to those delicate matters on which men of more prudence or chivalry are wont to set the seal of silence, has often the same practical effect as reticence; for he talks so much at large—every page of his Journal being, by his own admission, apt to "confute and abjure its predecessor"—that we are often none the wiser. Amid a mass of conjecture, it is manifest that during the years between his return from Greece and final expatriation (1811–1816), including the whole period of his social glory—though not yet of his solid fame—he was lured into liaisons of all sorts and shades. Some, now acknowledged as innocent, were blared abroad by tongues less skilled in pure invention than in distorting truth. On others, as commonplaces of a temperament "all meridian," it were waste of time to dwell. Byron rarely put aside a pleasure in his path; but his passions were seldom unaccompanied by affectionate emotions, genuine while they lasted. The verses to the memory of a lost love veiled as "Thyrza," of moderate artistic merit, were not, as Moore alleges, mere plays of imagination, but records of a sincere grief.[1] Another intimacy exerted so much influence on this phase of the poet's career, that to

[1] Mr. Trelawny says that Thyrza was a cousin, but that on this subject Byron was always reticent. Mr. Minto, as we have seen, associates her with the disguised girl of 1807–8.

pass it over would be like omitting Vanessa's name from the record of Swift. Lady Caroline Lamb, granddaughter of the first Earl Spencer, was one of those few women of our climate who, by their romantic impetuosity, recall the "children of the sun." She read Burns in her ninth year, and in her thirteenth idealized William Lamb (afterwards Lord Melbourne) as a statue of Liberty. In her nineteenth (1805) she married him, and lived for some years, during which she was a reigning belle and toast, a domestic life only marred by occasional eccentricities. Rogers, whom in a letter to Lady Morgan she numbers among her lovers, said she ought to know the new poet, who was three years her junior, and the introduction took place in March, 1812. After the meeting, she wrote in her journal, "Mad—bad —and dangerous to know;" but, when the fashionable Apollo called at Melbourne House, she "flew to beautify herself." Flushed by his conquest, he spent a great part of the following year in her company, during which time the apathy or self-confidence of the husband laughed at the worship of the hero. "Conrad" detailed his travels and adventures, interested her by his woes, dictated her amusements, invited her guests, and seems to have set rules to the establishment. "Medora," on the other hand, made no secret of her devotion, declared that they were affinities, and offered him her jewels. But after the first excitement, he began to grow weary of her talk about herself, and could not praise her indifferent verses: "he grew moody, and she fretful, when their mutual egotisms jarred." Byron at length concurred in her being removed for a season to her father's house in Ireland, on which occasion he wrote one of his glowing farewell letters. When she came back, matters were little better. The would-be Juliet beset the poet with renewed advances, on one occasion

penetrating to his rooms in the disguise of a page, on another threatening to stab herself with a pair of scissors, and again, developing into a Medea, offering her gratitude to any one who would kill him. "The 'Agnus' is furious," he writes to Hodgson, in February, 1813, in one of the somewhat ungenerous bursts to which he was too easily provoked. "You can have no idea of the horrible and absurd things she has said and done since (really from the best motives) I withdrew my homage. . . . The business of last summer I broke off, and now the amusement of the gentle fair is writing letters literally threatening my life." With one member of the family, Lady Melbourne, Mr. Lamb's mother, and sister of Sir Ralph Milbanke, he remained throughout on terms of pleasant intimacy. He appreciated the talent and sense, and was ready to profit by the experience and tact of "the cleverest of women." But her well-meant advice had unfortunate results, for it was on her suggestion that he became a suitor for the hand of her niece, Miss Milbanke. Byron first proposed to this lady in 1813; his offer was refused, but so graciously that they continued to correspond on friendly, which gradually grew into intimate terms, and his second offer, towards the close of the following year, was accepted.

After a series of vain protests, and petulant warnings against her cousin by marriage, who she said was punctual at church, and learned, and knew statistics, but was "not for Conrad, no, no, no!" Lady Caroline lapsed into an attitude of fixed hostility; and shortly after the crash came, and her predictions were realized, vented her wrath in the now almost forgotten novel of *Glenarvon*, in which some of Byron's real features were represented in conjunction with many fantastic additions. Madame de Staël was kind enough to bring a copy of the book before his notice

when they met on the Lake of Geneva, but he seems to have been less moved by it than by most attacks. We must, however, bear in mind his own admission in a parallel case. "I say I am perfectly calm; I am, nevertheless, in a fury." Over the sad vista of the remaining years of the unhappy lady's life we need not linger. During a considerable part of it she appears hovering about the thin line that separates some kinds of wit and passion from madness; writing more novels, burning her hero's effigy and letters, and then clamouring for a lock of his hair, or a sight of his portrait; separated from, and again reconciled to, a husband to whose magnanimous forbearance and compassion she bears testimony to the last, comparing herself to Jane Shore; attempting Byronic verses, loudly denouncing and yet never ceasing inwardly to idolize, the man whom she regarded as her betrayer, perhaps only with justice in that he had unwittingly helped to overthrow her mental balance. After eight years of this life, lit up here and there by gleams of social brilliancy, we find her carriage, on the 12th of July, 1824, suddenly confronted by a funeral. On hearing that the remains of Byron were being carried to the tomb, she shrieked, and fainted. Her health finally sank, and her mind gave way under this shock; but she lingered till January, 1828, when she died, after writing a calm letter to her husband, and bequeathing the poet's miniature to her friend, Lady Morgan.

"I have paid some of my debts, and contracted others," Byron writes to Moore, on September 15, 1814; "but I have a few thousand pounds which I can't spend after my heart in this climate, and so I shall go back to the south. I want to see Venice and the Alps, and Parmesan cheeses, and look at the coast of Greece from Italy. All this, however, depends upon an event which may or may

not happen. Whether it will, I shall probably know to-morrow; and if it does, I can't well go abroad at present." "A wife," he had written, in the January of the same year, "would be my salvation;" but a marriage entered upon in such a flippant frame of mind could scarcely have been other than disastrous. In the autumn of the year we are told that a friend,[1] observing how cheerless was the state both of his mind and prospects, advised him to marry, and after much discussion he consented, naming to his correspondent Miss Milbanke. To this his adviser objected, remarking that she had, at present, no fortune, and that his embarrassed affairs would not allow him to marry without one, &c. Accordingly, he agreed that his friend should write a proposal to another lady, which was done. A refusal arrived as they were one morning sitting together. "'You see,' said Lord Byron, 'that after all Miss Milbanke is to be the person,' and wrote on the moment. His friend, still remonstrating against his choice, took up the letter; but, on reading it, observed, 'Well, really, this is a very pretty letter; it is a pity it should not go.' 'Then it *shall* go,' said Lord Byron, and, in so saying, sealed and sent off this fiat of his fate." The incident seems cut from a French novel; but so does the whole strange story—the one apparently insoluble enigma in an otherwise only too transparent life. On the arrival of the lady's answer he was seated at dinner, when his gardener came in and presented him with his mother's wedding-ring, lost many years before, and which had just been found, buried in the mould beneath her window. Almost at the same moment the letter arrived; and Byron exclaimed, "If it contains a consent (which it did), I will be married with this very ring." He had the highest anticipations of his bride,

[1] Doubtless Moore himself, who tells the story.

appreciating her "talents, and excellent qualities;" and saying, "she is so good a person that I wish I was a better." About the same date he writes to various friends in the good spirits raised by his enthusiastic reception from the Cambridge undergraduates, when in the course of the same month he went to the Senate House to give his vote for a Professor of Anatomy.

The most constant and best of those friends was his sister, Augusta Leigh, whom, from the death of Miss Chaworth to his own, Byron, in the highest and purest sense of the word, loved more than any other human being. Tolerant of errors which she lamented, and violences in which she had no share, she had a touch of their common family pride, most conspicuous in an almost cat-like clinging to their ancestral home. Her early published letters are full of regrets about the threatened sale of Newstead, on the adjournment of which, when the first purchaser had to pay 25,000*l.* for breaking his bargain, she rejoices, and over the consummation of which she mourns, in the manner of Milton's Eve—

"Must I then leave thee, Paradise?"

In all her references to the approaching marriage there are blended notes of hope and fear. In thanking Hodgson for his kind congratulations, she trusts it will secure her brother's happiness. Later she adds her testimony to that of all outsiders at this time, as to the graces and genuine worth of the object of his choice. After the usual preliminaries, the ill-fated pair were united, at Seaham House, on the 2nd of January, 1815. Byron was married like one walking in his sleep. He trembled like a leaf, made the wrong responses, and almost from the first seems to have been conscious of his irrevocable mistake.

"I saw him stand
Before an altar with a gentle bride:
Her face was fair, but was not that which made
The starlight of his boyhood. He could see
Not that which was—but that which should have been—
But the old mansion, the accustom'd hall.
And she who was his destiny came back,
And thrust herself between him and the light."

Here we have faint visions of Miss Chaworth, mingling with later memories. In handing the bride into the carriage he said, "Miss Milbanke, are you ready?"—a mistake said to be of evil omen. Byron never really loved his wife; and though he has been absurdly accused of marrying for revenge, we must suspect that he married in part for a settlement. On the other hand, it is not unfair to say that she was fascinated by a name, and inspired by the philanthropic zeal of reforming a literary Corsair. Both were disappointed. Miss Milbanke's fortune was mainly settled on herself; and Byron, in spite of plentiful resolutions, gave little sign of reformation. For a considerable time their life, which, after the "treacle moon," as the bridegroom called it, spent at Halnaby, near Darlington, was divided between residence at Seaham and visits to London, seemed to move smoothly. In a letter, evidently mis-dated the 15th December, Mrs. Leigh writes to Hodgson: "I have every reason to think that my beloved B. is very happy and comfortable. I hear constantly from him and *his rib*. It appears to me that Lady B. sets about making him happy in the right way. I had many fears. Thank God that they do not appear likely to be realized. In short, there seems to me to be but one drawback to all our felicity, and that, alas, is the disposal of dear Newstead. I never shall feel reconciled to the loss of that sacred re-

vered Abbey. The thought makes me more melancholy than perhaps the loss of an inanimate object ought to do. Did you ever hear that *landed property*, the GIFT OF THE CROWN, could not be sold? Lady B. writes me word that she never saw her father and mother so happy; that she believes the latter would go to the bottom of the sea herself to find fish for B.'s dinner, &c." Augusta Ada was born in London on the 10th of December, 1815. During the next months a few cynical mutterings are the only interruptions to an ominous silence; but these could be easily explained by the increasing embarrassment of the poet's affairs, and the importunity of creditors, who in the course of the last half-year had served seven or eight executions on his house and furniture. Their expectations were raised by exaggerated reports of his having married money; and by a curious pertinacity of pride he still declined, even when he had to sell his books to accept advances from his publisher. In January the storm which had been secretly gathering suddenly broke. On the 15th, *i. e.*, five weeks after her daughter's birth, Lady Byron left home with the infant to pay a visit, as had been agreed, to her own family at Kirkby Mallory, in Leicestershire. On the way she despatched to her husband a tenderly playful letter, which has been often quoted. Shortly afterwards he was informed—first by her father, and then by herself—that she did not intend ever to return to him. The accounts of their last interview, as in the whole evidence bearing on the affair, not only differ, but flatly contradict one another. On behalf of Lord Byron it is asserted that his wife, infuriated by his offering some innocent hospitality on occasion of bad weather to a respectable actress, Mrs. Mardyn, who had called on him about Drury Lane business, rushed into the room, exclaiming, "I leave you for ever"—and did

so. According to another story, Lady Byron, finding him with a friend, and observing him to be annoyed at her entrance, said, "Am I in your way, Byron?" whereupon he answered, "Damnably." Mrs. Leigh, Hodgson, Moore, and others did everything that mutual friends could do to bring about the reconciliation for which Byron himself professed to be eager, but in vain; and in vain the effort was renewed in later years. The wife was inveterately bent on a separation, of the causes of which the husband alleged he was never informed, and with regard to which as long as he lived she preserved a rigid silence.

For some time after the event Byron spoke of his wife with at least apparent generosity. Rightly or wrongly, he blamed her parents, and her maid—Mrs. Clermont, the theme of his scathing but not always dignified "Sketch;" but of herself he wrote (March 8, 1816), "I do not believe that there ever was a brighter, and a kinder, or a more amiable or agreeable being than Lady Byron. I never had nor can have any reproach to make to her, when with me." Elsewhere he adds, that he would willingly, if he had the chance, "renew his marriage on a lease of twenty years." But as time passed and his overtures were rejected, his patience gave way, and in some of his later satires he even broke the bounds of courtesy. Lady Byron's letters at the time of the separation, especially those first published in the *Academy* of July 19, 1879, are to Mrs. Leigh always affectionate and confidential, often pathetic, asking her advice "in this critical moment," and protesting that, "independent of malady, she does not think of the past with any spirit of resentment, and scarcely with the sense of injury." In her communications to Mr. Hodgson, on the other hand—the first of almost the same date, the second a few weeks later—she

writes with intense bitterness, stating that her action was due to offences which she could only condone on the supposition of her husband's insanity, and distinctly implying that she was in danger of her life. This supposition having been by her medical advisers pronounced erroneous, she felt, in the words only too pungently recalled in *Don Juan*, that her duty both to man and God prescribed her course of action. Her playful letter on leaving she seems to defend on the ground of the fear of personal violence. Till Lord Byron's death the intimacy between his wife and sister remained unbroken; through the latter he continued to send numerous messages to the former, and to his child, who became a ward in Chancery; but at a later date it began to cool. On the appearance of Lady Byron's letter, in answer to Moore's first volume, Augusta speaks of it as "a despicable tirade;" feels "disgusted at such unfeeling conduct;" and thinks "nothing can justify any one in defaming the dead." Soon after 1830 they had an open rupture on a matter of business, which was never really healed, though the then Puritanic precisian sent a message of relenting to Mrs. Leigh on her deathbed (1851).

The charge or charges which, during her husband's life, Lady Byron from magnanimity or other motive reserved, she is ascertained, after his death, to have delivered with important modifications to various persons, with little regard to their capacity for reading evidence or to their discretion. On one occasion her choice of a confidante was singularly unfortunate. "These," wrote Lord Byron in his youth, "these are the first tidings that have ever sounded like fame in my ears—to be redde on the banks of the Ohio." Strangely enough, it is from the country of Washington, whom the poet was wont to reverence as

the purest patriot of the modern world, that in 1869 there emanated the hideous story which scandalized both continents, and ultimately recoiled on the retailer of the scandal. The grounds of the reckless charge have been weighed by those who have wished it to prove false, and by those who have wished it prove true, and found wanting. The chaff has been beaten in every way and on all sides, without yielding a particle of grain; and it were ill-advised to rake up the noxious dust that alone remains. From nothing left on record by either of the two persons most intimately concerned can we derive any reliable information. It is plain that Lady Byron was during the later years of her life the victim of hallucinations, and that if Byron knew the secret, which he denies, he did not choose to tell it, putting off Captain Medwin and others with absurdities, as that "He did not like to see women eat," or with commonplaces, as "The causes, my dear sir, were too simple to be found out."

Thomas Moore, who had the Memoirs[1] supposed to have thrown light on the mystery, in the full knowledge of Dr. Lushington's judgment and all the gossip of the day, professes to believe that "the causes of disunion did not differ from those that loosen the links of most such marriages," and writes several pages on the trite theme that great genius is incompatible with domestic happiness. Negative instances abound to modify this sweeping generalization; but there is a kind of genius, closely associated with intense irritability, which it is difficult to subject to the most reasonable yoke; and of this sort was Byron's. His valet, Fletcher, is reported to have said that "Any woman could manage my lord, except my lady;" and Madame De Staël, on reading the *Farewell*, that "She

[1] Captain Trelawny, however, doubts if he ever read them.

would have been glad to have been in Lady Byron's place." But it may be doubted if Byron would have made a good husband to any woman; his wife and he were even more than usually ill-assorted. A model of the proprieties, and a pattern of the learned philanthropy of which in her sex he was wont to make a constant butt, she was no fit consort for that "mens insana in corpore insano." What could her placid temperament conjecture of a man whom she saw, in one of his fits of passion, throwing a favourite watch under the fire, and grinding it to pieces with a poker? Or how could her conscious virtue tolerate the recurring irregularities which he was accustomed not only to permit himself but to parade? The harassment of his affairs stimulated his violence, till she was inclined to suspect him to be mad. Some of her recently printed letters—as that to Lady Anne Barnard, and the reports of later observers of her character—as William Howitt, tend to detract from the earlier tributes to her consistent amiability, and confirm our ideas of the incompatibility of the pair. It must have been trying to a poet to be asked by his wife, impatient of his late hours, when he was going to leave off writing verses; to be told he had no real enthusiasm; or to have his desk broken open, and its compromising contents sent to the persons for whom they were least intended. The smouldering elements of discontent may have been fanned by the gossip of dependants, or the officious zeal of relatives, and kindled into a jealous flame by the ostentation of regard for others beyond the circle of his home. Lady Byron doubtless believed some story which, when communicated to her legal advisers, led them to the conclusion that the mere fact of her believing it made reconciliation impossible; and the inveterate obstinacy which lurked beneath her gracious

exterior made her cling through life to the substance—not always to the form, whatever that may have been—of her first impressions. Her later letters to Mrs. Leigh, as that called forth by Moore's *Life*, are certainly as open to the charge of self-righteousness, as those of her husband's are to self-disparagement.

Byron himself somewhere says, "Strength of endurance is worth all the talent in the world." "I love the virtues that I cannot share." His own courage was all active; he had no power of sustained endurance. At a time when his proper refuge was silence, and his prevailing sentiment —for he admits he was somehow to blame—should have been remorse, he foolishly vented his anger and his grief in verses, most of them either peevish or vindictive, and some of which he certainly permitted to be published. "Woe to him," exclaims Voltaire, "who says all he could on any subject!" Woe to him, he might have added, who says anything at all on the subject of his domestic troubles! The poet's want of reticence at this crisis started a host of conjectures, accusations, and calumnies, the outcome, in some degree at least, of the rancorous jealousy of men with whose adulation he was weary. Then began that burst of British virtue on which Macaulay has expatiated, and at which the social critics of the continent have laughed. Cottle, Cato, Oxoniensis, Delia, and Styles were let loose, and they anticipated the *Saturday* and the *Spectator* of 1869, so that the latter might well have exclaimed, "Pereant qui ante nos nostra dixerunt." Byron was accused of every possible and impossible vice. He was compared to Sardanapalus, Nero, Tiberius, the Duke of Orleans, Heliogabalus, and Satan—all the most disreputable persons mentioned in sacred and profane history; his benevolences were maligned, his most

disinterested actions perverted. Mrs. Mardyn, the actress, was on his account, on one occasion, driven off the public stage. He was advised not to go to the theatres, lest he should be hissed; nor to Parliament, lest he should be insulted. On the very day of his departure a friend told him that he feared violence from mobs assembling at the door of his carriage. "Upon what grounds," the poet writes, in an incisive survey of the circumstances, in August, 1819, "the public formed their opinion, I am not aware; but it was general, and it was decisive. Of me and of mine they knew little, except that I had written poetry, was a nobleman, had married, became a father, and was involved in differences with my wife and her relatives —no one knew why, because the persons complaining refused to state their grievances.

"The press was active and scurrilous; . . . my name —which had been a knightly or a noble one since my fathers helped to conquer the kingdom for William the Norman—was tainted. I felt that, if what was whispered and muttered and murmured was true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was unfit for me. I withdrew; but this was not enough. In other countries—in Switzerland, in the shadow of the Alps, and by the blue depth of the lakes—I was pursued and breathed upon by the same blight. I crossed the mountains, but it was the same; so I went a little farther, and settled myself by the waves of the Adriatic, like the stag at bay, who betakes himself to the waters."

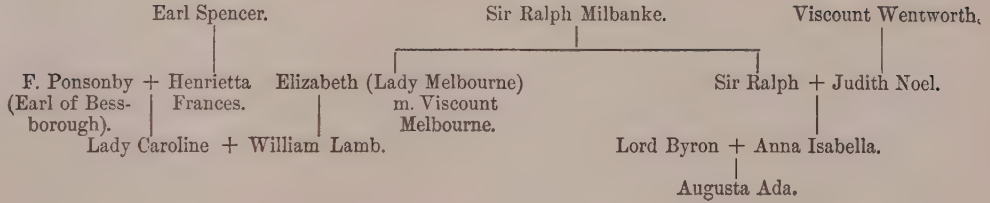
On the 16th of April, 1816, shortly before his departure, he wrote to Mr. Rogers: "My sister is now with me, and leaves town to-morrow. We shall not meet again for some time, at all events, if ever (it was their final meeting), and under these circumstances I trust to stand ex-

cused to you and Mr. Sheridan for being unable to wait upon him this evening." In all this storm and stress, Byron's one refuge was in the affection which rises like a well of purity amid the passions of his turbid life.

> "In the desert a fountain is springing,
> In the wild waste there still is a tree;
> And a bird in the solitude singing,
> That speaks to my spirit of thee."

The fashionable world was tired of its spoilt child, and he of it. Hunted out of the country, bankrupt in purse and heart, he left it, never to return; but he left it to find fresh inspiration by the "rushing of the arrowy Rhone," and under Italian skies to write the works which have immortalized his name.

DESCENT OF LADY BYRON AND LADY C. LAMB.



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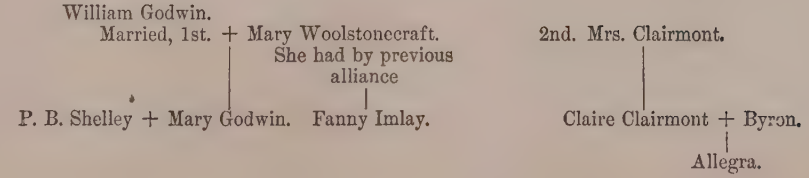

CHAPTER VII.

LIFE ABROAD.—SWITZERLAND TO VENICE.—THIRD PERIOD OF AUTHORSHIP.—CHILDE HAROLD, III., IV.—MANFRED.

On the 25th of April, 1816, Byron embarked for Ostend. From the "burning marl" of the staring streets he planted his foot again on the deck with a genuine exultation.

> "Once more upon the waters, yet once more,
> And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
> That knows her rider. Welcome to the roar!"

But he brought with him a relic of English extravagance, setting out on his land travels in a huge coach, copied from that of Napoleon taken at Genappe, and being accompanied by Fletcher, Rushton, Berger, a Swiss, and an Italian physician, called Polidori, son of Alfieri's secretary—a man of some talent but fatal conceit. A question arises as to the source from which he obtained the means for these and subsequent luxuries, in striking contrast with Goldsmith's walking-stick, knapsack, and flute. Byron's financial affairs are almost inextricably confused. We can, for instance, nowhere find a clear statement of the result of the suit regarding the Rochdale Estates, save that he lost it before the Court of Exchequer, and that his appeal to the House of Lords was still unsettled in 1822. The sale of Newstead to Colonel Wildman in 1818, for 90,000*l.*, went mostly to pay off mortgages and debts. In April,

1819, Mrs. Leigh writes, after a last sigh over this event: "Sixty thousand pounds was secured by his (Byron's) marriage settlement, the interest of which he receives for life, and which ought to make him very comfortable." This is unfortunately decisive of the fact that he did not in spirit adhere to the resolution expressed to Moore never to touch a farthing of his wife's money, though we may accept his statement to Medwin, that he twice repaid the dowry of 10,000*l.* brought to him at the marriage, as in so far diminishing the obligation. None of the capital of Lady Byron's family came under his control till 1822, when, on the death of her mother, Lady Noel, Byron arranged the appointment of referees—Sir Francis Burdett on his behalf, Lord Dacre on his wife's. The result was an equal division of a property worth about 7000*l.* a year. While in Italy, the poet received, besides, about 10,000*l.* for his writings—4000*l.* being given for *Childe Harold* (iii., iv.) and *Manfred*. "Ne pas être dupe" was one of his determinations, and, though he began by caring little for making money, he was always fond of spending it. "I tell you it is too much," he said to Murray, in returning a thousand guineas for the *Corinth* and *Parisina*. Hodgson, Moore, Bland, Thomas Ashe, the family of Lord Falkland, the British Consul at Venice, and a host of others were ready to testify to his superb munificence. On the other hand, he would stint his pleasures, or his benevolences, which were among them, for no one; and when he found that to spend money he had to make it, he saw neither rhyme nor reason in accepting less than his due. In 1817 he begins to dun Murray, declaring, with a frankness in which we can find no fault, "You offer 1500 guineas for the new canto (*C. H.*, iv.). I won't take it. I ask 2500 guineas for it, which you will either give or not, as

you think proper." During the remaining years of his life he grew more and more exact, driving hard bargains for his houses, horses, and boats, and fitting himself, had he lived, to be Chancellor of the Exchequer in the newly-liberated State, from which he took a bond securing a fair interest for his loan. He made out an account in £ *s.* *d.* against the ungrateful Dallas, and when Leigh Hunt threatened to sponge upon him, he got a harsh reception; but there is nothing to countenance the view that Byron was ever really possessed by the "good old gentlemanly vice" of which he wrote. The Skimpoles and Chadbands of the world are always inclined to talk of filthy lucre: it is equally a fashion of really lavish people to boast that they are good men of business.

We have only a few glimpses of Byron's progress. At Brussels the Napoleonic coach was set aside for a more serviceable caleche. During his stay in the Belgian capital he paid a visit to the scene of Waterloo, wrote the famous stanzas beginning, "Stop, for thy tread is on an empire's dust!" and, in unpatriotic prose, recorded his impressions of a plain which appeared to him to "want little but a better cause" to make it vie in interest with those of Platea and Marathon.

The rest of his journey lay up the Rhine to Basle, thence to Berne, Lausanne, and Geneva, where he settled for a time at the Hôtel Secheron, on the western shore of the lake. Here began the most interesting literary relationship of his life, for here he first came in contact with the impassioned Ariel of English verse, Percy Bysshe Shelley. They lived in proximity after they left the hotel, Shelley's headquarters being at Mont Alégre, and Byron's for the remainder of the summer at the Villa Diodati; and their acquaintance rapidly ripened into an intimacy which, with

some interruptions, extended over the six remaining years of their joint lives. The place for an estimate of their mutual influence belongs to the time of their Italian partnership. Meanwhile, we hear of them mainly as fellow-excursionists about the lake, which on one occasion, departing from its placid poetical character, all but swallowed them both, along with Hobhouse, off Meillerie. "The boat," says Byron, "was nearly wrecked near the very spot where St. Preux and Julia were in danger of being drowned. It would have been classical to have been lost there, but not agreeable. I ran no risk, being so near the rocks and a good swimmer; but our party were wet and incommoded." The only anxiety of Shelley, who could not swim, was, that no one else should risk a life for his. Two such revolutionary or such brave poets were, in all probability, never before nor since in a storm in a boat together. During this period Byron complains of being still persecuted. "I was in a wretched state of health and worse spirits when I was in Geneva; but quiet and the lake — better physicians than Polidori — soon set me up. I never led so moral a life as during my residence in that country, but I gained no credit by it. On the contrary, there is no story so absurd that they did not invent at my cost. I was watched by glasses on the opposite side of the lake, and by glasses, too, that must have had very distorted optics. I was waylaid in my evening drives. I believe they looked upon me as a man-monster." Shortly after his arrival in Switzerland he contracted an intimacy with Miss Clairmont, a daughter of Godwin's second wife, and consequently a connexion by marriage of the Shelleys, with whom she was living, which resulted in the birth of a daughter, Allegra, at Great Marlow, in February, 1817. The noticeable events of the following two months are

a joint excursion to Chamouni, and a visit in July to Madame de Staël at Coppet, in the course of which he met Frederick Schlegel. During a wet week, when the families were reading together some German ghost stories, an idea occurred of imitating them, the main result of which was Mrs. Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Byron contributed to the scheme a fragment of *The Vampire*, afterwards completed and published in the name of his patron by Polidori. This eccentric physician now began to develope a vein of half insanity; his jealousy of Shelley grew to such a pitch that it resulted in the doctor's sending a challenge to the poet. Shelley only laughed at this; but Byron, to stop further impertinences of the kind, remarked, "Recollect that, though Shelley has scruples about duelling, I have none, and shall be at all times ready to take his place." Polidori had ultimately to be dismissed, and, after some years of absurd adventure, committed suicide.

The Shelleys left for England in September, and Byron made an excursion with Hobhouse through the Bernese Oberland. They went by the Col de Jaman and the Simmenthal to Thun; then up the valley to the Staubbach, which he compares to the tail of the pale horse in the Apocalypse — not a very happy, though a striking comparison. Thence they proceeded over the Wengern to Grindelwald and the Rosenlau glacier; then back by Berne, Friburg, and Yverdun to Diodati. The following passage in reference to this tour may be selected as a specimen of his prose description, and of the ideas of mountaineering before the days of the Alpine Club:—

"Before ascending the mountain, went to the torrent again, the sun upon it forming a rainbow of the lower part, of all colours, but principally purple and gold, the bow moving as you move. I never saw anything like this; it

is only in the sunshine. . . . Left the horses, took off my coat, and went to the summit, 7000 English feet above the level of the sea, and 5000 feet above the valley we left in the morning. On one side our view comprised the Jungfrau, with all her glaciers; then the Dent d'Argent, shining like truth; then the Eighers and the Wetterhorn. Heard the avalanches falling every five minutes. From where we stood on the Wengern Alp we had all these in view on one side; on the other, the clouds rose up from the opposite valley, curling up perpendicular precipices, like the foam of the ocean of hell during a spring tide; it was white and sulphury, and immeasurably deep in appearance. . . . Arrived at the Grindelwald; dined; mounted again, and rode to the higher glacier—like a frozen hurricane; starlight beautiful, but a devil of a path. Passed whole woods of withered pines, all withered; trunks stripped and barkless, branches lifeless; done by a single winter. Their appearance reminded me of me and my family."

Students of *Manfred* will recognize whole sentences, only slightly modified in its verse. Though Byron talks with contempt of authorship, there is scarce a fine phrase in his letters or journal which is not pressed into the author's service. He turns his deepest griefs to artistic gain, and uses five or six times, for literary purposes, the expression which seems to have dropped from him naturally about his household gods being shivered on his hearth. His account of this excursion concludes with a passage equally characteristic of his melancholy and incessant self-consciousness:—

"In the weather for this tour I have been very fortunate. . . . I was disposed to be pleased. I am a lover of nature, &c. . . . But in all this the recollection of bit-

terness, and more especially of recent and more home desolation, which must accompany me through life, have preyed upon me here; and neither the music of the shepherd, the crashing of the avalanche, the torrent, the mountain, the glacier, the forest, nor the cloud, have for one moment lightened the weight upon my heart, nor enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty, and the power, and the glory around, above, and beneath me."

Such egotism in an idle man would only provoke impatience; but Byron was, during the whole of this period, almost preternaturally active. Detained by bad weather at Ouchy for two days (June 26, 27), he wrote the *Prisoner of Chillon*, which, with his noble introductory sonnet on Bonnivard, in some respects surpasses any of his early romances. The opening lines—

> "Lake Leman lies by Chillon's walls;
> A thousand feet in depth below,
> Its massy waters meet and flow"—

bring before us in a few words the conditions of a hopeless bondage. The account of the prisoner himself, and of the lingering deaths of the brothers; the first frenzy of the survivor, and the desolation which succeeds it—

> "I only loved: I only drew
> The accursed breath of dungeon dew"—

the bird's song breaking on the night of his solitude; his growing enamoured of despair, and regaining his freedom with a sigh, are all strokes from a master hand. From the same place, at the same date, he announces to Murray the completion of the third canto of *Childe Harold*. The productiveness of July is portentous. During that month he wrote the *Monody on Sheridan*, *The Dream*,

Churchill's Grave, the *Sonnet to Lake Leman*, *Could I remount the River of my Years*, part of *Manfred*, *Prometheus*, the *Stanzas to Augusta*, beginning,

> "My sister! my sweet sister! If a name
> Dearer and purer were, it should be thine;"

and the terrible dream of *Darkness*, which at least in the ghastly power of the close, where the survivors meet by the lurid light of a dim altar fire, and die of each other's hideousness, surpasses Campbell's *Last Man*.[1] At Lausanne the poet made a pilgrimage to the haunts of Gibbon, broke a sprig from his acacia-tree, and carried off some rose leaves from his garden. Though entertaining friends, among them Mr. M. G. Lewis and Scrope Davies, he systematically shunned "the locust swarm of English tourists," remarking on their obtrusive platitudes; as when he heard one of them at Chamouni inquire, "Did you ever see anything more truly rural?" Ultimately he got tired of the Calvinistic Genevese—one of whom is said to have swooned as he entered the room—and early in October set out with Hobhouse for Italy. They crossed the Simplon, and proceeded by the Lago Maggiore to Milan, admiring the pass, but slighting the somewhat hothouse beauties of the Borromean Islands. From Milan he writes, pronouncing its cathedral to be only a little inferior to that of Seville, and delighted with "a correspondence, all original and amatory, between Lucretia Borgia and Cardinal Bembo." He secured a lock of the golden hair of the Pope's daughter, and wished himself a cardinal.

At Verona, Byron dilates on the amphitheatre, as surpassing anything he had seen even in Greece, and on the

[1] This only appeared in 1831, but Campbell claims to have given Byron in conversation the suggestion of the subject.

faith of the people in the story of Juliet, from whose reputed tomb he sent some pieces of granite to Ada and his nieces. In November we find him settled in Venice, "the greenest isle of his imagination." There he began to form those questionable alliances which are so marked a feature of his life, and so frequent a theme in his letters, that it is impossible to pass them without notice. The first of his temporary idols was Mariana Segati, "the wife of a merchant of Venice," for some time his landlord. With this woman, whom he describes as an antelope with oriental eyes, wavy hair, a voice like the cooing of a dove, and the spirit of a Bacchante, he remained on terms of intimacy for about eighteen months, during which their mutual devotion was only disturbed by some outbursts of jealousy. In December the poet took lessons in Armenian, glad to find in the study something craggy to break his mind upon. He translated into that language a portion of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians. Notes on the carnival, praises of *Christabel*, instructions about the printing of *Childe Harold* (iii.), protests against the publication under his name of some spurious "domestic poems," and constant references, doubtfully domestic, to his Adriatic lady, fill up the records of 1816. On February 15, 1817, he announces to Murray the completion of the first sketch of *Manfred*, and alludes to it in a bantering manner as "a kind of poem in dialogue, of a wild metaphysical and inexplicable kind;" concluding, "I have at least rendered it *quite impossible* for the stage, for which my intercourse with Drury Lane has given me the greatest contempt."

About this time Byron seems to have entertained the idea of returning to England in the spring, *i. e.*, after a year's absence. This design, however, was soon set aside, partly in consequence of a slow malarial fever, by which

he was prostrated for several weeks. On his partial recovery, attributed to his having had neither medicine nor doctor, and a determination to live till he had "put one or two people out of the world," he started on an expedition to Rome.

His first stage was Arqua; then Ferrara, where he was inspired, by a sight of the Italian poet's prison, with the *Lament of Tasso;* the next, Florence, where he describes himself as drunk with the beauty of the galleries. Among the pictures, he was most impressed with the mistresses of Raphael and Titian, to whom, along with Giorgione, he is always reverential; and he recognized in Santa Croce the Westminster Abbey of Italy. Passing through Foligno, he reached his destination early in May, and met his old friends, Lord Lansdowne and Hobhouse. The poet employed his short time at Rome in visiting on horseback the most famous sites in the city and neighbourhood—as the Alban Mount, Tivoli, Frascati, the Falls of Terni, and the Clitumnus—re-casting the crude first draft of the third act of *Manfred*, and sitting for his bust to Thorwaldsen. Of this sitting the sculptor afterwards gave some account to his compatriot, Hans Andersen: "Byron placed himself opposite to me, but at once began to put on a quite different expression from that usual to him. 'Will you not sit still?' said I. 'You need not assume that look.' 'That is my expression,' said Byron. 'Indeed,' said I; and I then represented him as I wished. When the bust was finished he said, 'It is not at all like me; my expression is more unhappy.'" West, the American, who five years later painted his lordship at Leghorn, substantiates the above half-satirical anecdote, by the remark, "He was a bad sitter; he assumed a countenance that did not belong to him, as though he were thinking of a frontispiece

for *Childe Harold*." Thorwaldsen's bust, the first cast of which was sent to Hobhouse, and pronounced by Mrs. Leigh to be the best of the numerous likenesses of her brother, was often repeated. Professor Brandes, of Copenhagen, introduces his striking sketch of the poet by a reference to the model, that has its natural place in the museum named from the great sculptor whose genius had flung into the clay the features of a character so unlike his own. The bust, says the Danish critic, at first sight impresses one with an undefinable classic grace; on closer examination, the restlessness of a life is reflected in a brow over which clouds seem to hover, but clouds from which we look for lightnings. The dominant impression of the whole is that of some irresistible power (Unwiderstehlichkeit). Thorwaldsen, at a much later date (1829–1833), executed the marble statue, first intended for the Abbey, which is now to be seen in the library of Trinity College, in evidence that Cambridge is still proud of her most brilliant son.

Towards the close of the month—after almost fainting at the execution by guillotine of three bandits—he professes impatience to get back to Mariana, and early in the next we find him established with her near Venice, at the villa of La Mira, where for some time he continued to reside. His letters of June refer to the sale of Newstead, the mistake of Mrs. Leigh and others in attributing to him the *Tales of a Landlord*, the appearance of *Lalla Rookh*, preparations for *Marino Faliero*, and the progress of *Childe Harold* (iv.). This poem, completed in September, and published early in 1818 (with a dedication to Hobhouse, who had supplied most of the illustrative notes), first made manifest the range of the poet's power. Only another slope of ascent lay between him and the

pinnacle, over which shines the red star of *Cain*. Had Lord Byron's public career closed when he left England, he would have been remembered for a generation as the author of some musical minor verses, a clever satire, a journal in verse exhibiting flashes of genius, and a series of fascinating romances — also giving promise of higher power—which had enjoyed a marvellous popularity. The third and fourth cantos of *Childe Harold* placed him on another platform, that of the *Dii Majores* of English verse. These cantos are separated from their predecessors, not by a stage, but by a gulf. Previous to their publication he had only shown how far the force of rhapsody could go; now he struck with his right hand, and from the shoulder. Knowledge of life and study of Nature were the mainsprings of a growth which the indirect influence of Wordsworth, and the happy companionship of Shelley, played their part in fostering. Faultlessness is seldom a characteristic of impetuous verse, never of Byron's; and even in the later parts of the *Childe* there are careless lines and doubtful images. "Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again," looking "pale and interesting;" but we are soon refreshed by a higher note. No familiarity can detract from "Waterloo," which holds its own by Barbour's "Bannockburn" and Scott's "Flodden." Sir Walter, referring to the climax of the opening, and the pathetic lament of the closing lines, generously doubts whether any verses in English surpass them in vigour. There follows "The Broken Mirror," extolled by Jeffrey with an appreciation of its exuberance of fancy and negligence of diction; and then the masterly sketch of Napoleon, with the implied reference to the writer at the end.

The descriptions in both cantos perpetually rise from

a basis of rhetoric to a real height of poetry. Byron's "Rhine" flows, like the river itself, in a stream of "exulting and abounding" stanzas. His "Venice" may be set beside the masterpieces of Ruskin's prose. They are together the joint pride of Italy and England. The tempest in the third canto is in verse a splendid microcosm of the favourite, if not the prevailing mood of the writer's mind. In spite of manifest flaws, the nine stanzas beginning "It is the hush of night," have enough in them to feed a high reputation. The poet's dying day, his sun and moon contending over the Rhœtian hill, his Thrasymene, Clitumnus, and Velino, show that his eye has grown keener, and his imagery at least more terse, and that he can occasionally forget himself in his surroundings. The Drachenfells, Ehrenbreitstein, the Alps, Lake Leman, pass before us like a series of dissolving views. But the stability of the book depends on its being a Temple of Fame, as well as a Diorama of Scenery. It is no mere versified Guide, because every resting-place in the pilgrimage is made interesting by association with illustrious memories. Coblentz introduces the tribute to Marceau; Clarens an almost complete review, in five verses, of Rousseau; Lausanne and Ferney the quintessence of criticism on Gibbon and Voltaire. A tomb in Arqua suggests Petrarch; the grass-grown streets of Ferrara lead in the lines on Tasso; the white walls of the Etrurian Athens bring back Alfieri and Michael Angelo, and the prose bard of the hundred tales, and Dante, "buried by the upbraiding shore," and

> "The starry Galileo and his woes."

Byron has made himself so master of the glories and the wrecks of Rome, that almost everything else that has

been said of them seems superfluous. Hawthorne, in his *Marble Faun*, comes nearest to him; but Byron's Gladiator and Apollo, if not his Laocoon, are unequalled. "The voice of Marius," says Scott, "could not sound more deep and solemn among the ruins of Carthage than the strains of the pilgrim among the broken shrines and fallen statues of her subduer." As the third canto has a fitting close with the poet's pathetic remembrance of his daughter, so the fourth is wound up with consummate art—the memorable dirge on the Princess Charlotte being followed by the address to the sea, which, enduring unwrinkled through all its ebbs and flows, seems to mock at the mutability of human life.

Manfred, his witch drama, as the author called it, has had a special attraction for inquisitive biographers, because it has been supposed in some dark manner to reveal the secrets of his prison-house. Its lines have been tortured, like the witches of the seventeenth century, to extort from them the meaning of the "all nameless hour," and every conceivable horror has been alleged as its *motif*. On this subject Goethe writes with a humorous simplicity: "This singularly intellectual poet has extracted from my *Faust* the strongest nourishment for his hypochondria; but he has made use of the impelling principles for his own purposes.... When a bold and enterprising young man, he won the affections of a Florentine lady. Her husband discovered the amour, and murdered his wife; but the murderer was the same night found dead in the street, and there was no one to whom any suspicion could be attached. Lord Byron removed from Florence, but these spirits have haunted him all his life. This romantic incident explains innumerable allusions," *e. g.*,

"I have shed
Blood, but not hers; and yet her blood was shed."

Were it not for the fact that the poet had never seen the city in question when he wrote the poem, this explanation would be more plausible than most others, for the allusions are all to some lady who has been done to death. Galt asserts that the plot turns on a tradition of unhallowed necromancy—a human sacrifice, like that of Antinous attributed to Hadrian. Byron himself says it has no plot; but he kept teasing his questioners with mysterious hints, *e. g.*, "It was the Staubbach and the Jungfrau, and something else more than Faustus, which made me write *Manfred*;" and of one of his critics he says to Murray, "It had a better origin than he can devise or divine, for the soul of him." In any case most methods of reading between its lines would, if similarly applied, convict Sophocles, Schiller, and Shelley of incest, Shakspeare of murder, Milton of blasphemy, Scott of forgery, Marlowe and Goethe of compacts with the devil. Byron was no dramatist, but he had wit enough to vary at least the circumstances of his projected personality. The memories of both Fausts —the Elizabethan and the German—mingle, in the pages of this piece, with shadows of the author's life; but to these it never gives, nor could be intended to give, any substantial form.

Manfred is a chaos of pictures, suggested by the scenery of Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald, half animated by vague personifications and sensational narrative. Like *Harold* and Scott's *Marmion*, it just misses being a great poem. The Coliseum is its masterpiece of description; the appeal, "Astarte, my beloved, speak to me," its nearest approach to pathos. The lonely death of the hero makes an effective close to the moral tumult of the preceding

scenes. But the reflections, often striking, are seldom absolutely fresh: that beginning,

> "The mind, which is immortal, makes itself
> Requital for its good or evil thoughts,
> Is its own origin of ill and end,
> And its own place and time,"

is transplanted from Milton with as little change as Milton made in transplanting it from Marlowe. The author's own favourite passage, the invocation to the sun (act iii., sc. 2), has some sublimity, marred by lapses. The lyrics scattered through the poem sometimes open well, *e. g.*,—

> "Mont Blanc is the monarch of mountains;
> They crowned him long ago,
> On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,
> With a diadem of snow;"

but they cannot sustain themselves like true song-birds, and fall to the ground like spent rockets. This applies to Byron's lyrics generally; turn to the incantation in the *Deformed Transformed:* the first two lines are in tune—

> "Beautiful shadow of Thetis's boy,
> Who sleeps in the meadow whose grass grows o'er Troy."

Nor Sternhold nor Hopkins has more ruthlessly outraged our ears than the next two—

> "From the red earth, like Adam, thy likeness I shape,
> As the Being who made him, whose actions I ape (!)"

Of his songs: "There be none of Beauty's daughters," "She walks in beauty," "Maid of Athens," "I enter thy garden of roses," the translation "Sons of the Greeks," and others, have a flow and verve that it is pedantry to

ignore; but in general Byron was too much of the earth earthy to be a great lyrist. Some of the greatest have lived wild lives, but their wings were not weighted with the lead of the love of the world.

The summer and early months of the autumn of 1817 were spent at La Mira, and much of the poet's time was occupied in riding along the banks of the Brenta, often in the company of the few congenial Englishmen who came in his way; others, whom he avoided, avenged themselves by retailing stories, none of which were "too improbable for the craving appetites of their slander-loving countrymen." In August he received a visit from Mr. Hobhouse, and on this occasion drew up the remarkable document afterwards given to Mr. M. G. Lewis for circulation in England, which appeared in the *Academy* of October 9, 1869. In this document he says, "It has been intimated to me that the persons understood to be the legal advisers of Lady Byron have declared their lips to be sealed up on the cause of the separation between her and myself. If their lips are sealed up they are not sealed up by me, and the greatest favour they can confer upon me will be to open them." He goes on to state that he repents having consented to the separation—will be glad to cancel the deed, or to go before any tribunal to discuss the matter in the most public manner; adding, that Mr. Hobhouse (in whose presence he was writing) proposed, on his part, to go into court, and ending with a renewed asseveration of his ignorance of the allegations against him, and his inability to understand for what purpose they had been kept back, "unless it was to sanction the most infamous calumnies by silence." Hobhouse and others, during the four succeeding years, ineffectually endeavoured to persuade the poet to return to England. Moore and others insist that Byron's heart was

at home when his presence was abroad, and that, with all her faults, he loved his country still. Leigh Hunt, on the contrary, asserts that he cared nothing for England or its affairs. Like many men of genius, Byron was never satisfied with what he had at the time. "Romæ Tibur amem ventosus Tibure Romam." At Seaham he is bored to death, and pants for the excitement of the clubs; in London society he longs for a desert or island in the Cyclades; after their separation, he begins to regret his wife; after his exile, his country. "Where," he exclaimed to Hobhouse, "is real comfort to be found out of England?" He frequently fell into the mood in which he wrote the verse—

> "Yet I was born where men are proud to be,
> Not without cause: and should I leave behind
> Th' immortal island of the sage and free,
> And seek me out a home by a remoter sea?"

But the following, to Murray (June 7, 1819), is equally sincere: "Some of the epitaphs at Ferrara pleased me more than the more splendid monuments of Bologna; for instance—

> "'Martini Luigi
> Implora pace.'
>
> "'Lucrezia Picini
> Implora eterne quiete.'

Can anything be more full of pathos? These few words say all that can be said or sought; the dead had had enough of life; all they wanted was rest, and this they implore. There is all the helplessness, and humble hope, and death-like prayer that can arise from the grave—'implora pace.' I hope, whoever may survive me, and shall

see me put in the foreigner's burying-ground at the Lido, within the fortress by the Adriatic, will see these two words, and no more, put over me. I trust they won't think of pickling and bringing me home to Clod, or Blunderbuss Hall. I am sure my bones would not rest in an English grave, or my clay mix with the earth of that country." Hunt's view is, in this as in other subtle respects, nearer the truth than Moore's; for with all Byron's insight into Italian vice, he hated more the master vice of England—hypocrisy; and much of his greatest, and in a sense latest, because unfinished work, is the severest, as it might be the wholesomest, satire ever directed against a great nation since the days of Juvenal and Tacitus.

In September (1817) Byron entered into negotiations, afterwards completed, for renting a country house among the Euganean hills near Este, from Mr. Hoppner, the English Consul at Venice, who bears frequent testimony to his kindness and courtesy. In October we find him settled for the winter in Venice, where he first occupied his old quarters in the Spezieria, and afterwards hired one of the palaces of the Countess Mocenigo on the Grand Canal. Between this mansion, the cottage at Este, and the villa of La Mira, he divided his time for the next two years. During the earlier part of his Venetian career he had continued to frequent the salon of the Countess Albrizzi, where he met with people of both sexes of some rank and standing who appreciated his genius, though some among them fell into absurd mistakes. A gentleman of the company informing the hostess, in answer to some inquiry regarding Canova's busts, that Washington, the American President, was shot in a duel by Burke, "What in the name of folly are you thinking of?" said Byron, perceiving that the speaker was confounding Washington with

Hamilton, and Burke with Burr. He afterwards transferred himself to the rival coterie of the Countess Benzoni, and gave himself up with little reserve to the intrigues which cast discredit on this portion of his life. Nothing is so conducive to dissipation as despair, and Byron had begun to regard the Sea-Cybele as a Sea-Sodom—when he wrote, "To watch a city die daily, as she does, is a sad contemplation. I sought to distract my mind from a sense of her desolation and my own solitude, by plunging into a vortex that was anything but pleasure." In any case, he forsook the "Dame," and by what his biographer calls a "descent in the scale of refinement for which nothing but the wayward state of his mind can account," sought the companions of his leisure hours among the wearers of the "fazzioli." The carnivals of the years 1818, 1819, mark the height of his excesses. Early in the former, Mariana Segati fell out of favour, owing to Byron's having detected her in selling the jewels he had given as presents, and so being led to suspect a large mercenary element in her devotion. To her succeeded Margarita Cogni, the wife of a baker, who proved as accommodating as his predecessor, the linen-draper. This woman was decidedly a character, and Señor Castelar has almost elevated her into a heroine. A handsome virago, with brown shoulders and black hair, endowed with the strength of an Amazon, "a face like Faustina's, and the figure of a Juno—tall and energetic as a pythoness," she quartered herself for twelve months in the palace as "Donna di governo," and drove the servants about without let or hindrance. Unable to read or write, she intercepted his lordship's letters to little purpose; but she had great natural business talents, reduced by one half the expenses of his household, kept everything in good order, and, when her violences roused his wrath, turned it

off with some ready retort or witticism. She was very devout, and would cross herself three times at the Angelus. One instance, of a different kind of devotion, from Byron's own account, is sufficiently graphic: "In the autumn one day, going to the Lido with my gondoliers, we were overtaken by a heavy squall, and the gondola put in peril, hats blown away, boat filling, oar lost, tumbling sea, thunder, rain in torrents, and wind unceasing. On our return, after a tight struggle, I found her on the open steps of the Mocenigo Palace on the Grand Canal, with her great black eyes flashing through her tears, and the long dark hair which was streaming, drenched with rain, over her brows. She was perfectly exposed to the storm; and the wind blowing her dress about her thin figure, and the lightning flashing round her, made her look like Medea alighted from her chariot, or the Sibyl of the tempest that was rolling around her, the only living thing within hail at that moment except ourselves. On seeing me safe, she did not wait to greet me, as might have been expected; but, calling out to me, 'Ah! can' della Madonna, xe esto il tempo per andar' al' Lido,' ran into the house, and solaced herself with scolding the boatmen for not foreseeing the 'temporale.' Her joy at seeing me again was moderately mixed with ferocity, and gave me the idea of a tigress over her recovered cubs."

Some months after, she became ungovernable—threw plates about, and snatched caps from the heads of other women who looked at her lord in public places. Byron told her she must go home; whereupon she proceeded to break glass, and threaten "knives, poison, fire;" and on his calling his boatmen to get ready the gondola, threw herself in the dark night into the canal. She was rescued, and in a few days finally dismissed; after which he saw

her only twice, at the theatre. Her whole picture is more like that of Théroigne de Méricourt than that of Raphael's Fornarina, whose name she received.

Other stories, of course, gathered round this strange life —personal encounters, aquatic feats, and all manner of romantic and impossible episodes; their basis being that Byron on one occasion thrashed, on another challenged, a man who tried to cheat him, was a frequent rider, and a constant swimmer, so that he came to be called "the English fish," "water-spaniel," "sea-devil," &c. One of the boatmen is reported to have said, "He is a good gondolier, spoilt by being a poet and a lord;" and in answer to a traveller's inquiry, "Where does he get his poetry?" "He dives for it." His habits, as regards eating, seem to have been generally abstemious; but he drank a pint of gin and water over his verses at night, and then took claret and soda in the morning.

Riotous living may have helped to curtail Byron's life, but it does not seem to have seriously impaired his powers. Among these adverse surroundings of the "court of Circe," he threw off *Beppo*, *Mazeppa*, and the early books of *Don Juan*. The first canto of the last was written in November, 1818; the second in January, 1819; the third and fourth towards the close of the same year. *Beppo*, its brilliant prelude, sparkles like a draught of champagne. This "Venetian story," or sketch, in which the author broke ground on his true satiric field—the satire of social life—and first adopted the measure avowedly suggested by Frere's *Whistlecraft*, was drafted in October, 1817, and appeared in May, 1818. It aims at comparatively little, but is perfectly successful in its aim, and unsurpassed for the incisiveness of its side strokes, and the courtly ease of a manner that never degenerates into mannerism. In *Ma-*

zeppa the poet reverts to his earlier style, and that of Scott; the description of the headlong ride hurries us along with a breathless expectancy that gives it a conspicuous place among his minor efforts. The passage about the howling of the wolves, and the fever faint of the victim, is as graphic as anything in Burns—

> "The skies spun like a mighty wheel,
> I saw the trees like drunkards reel."

In the May or June of 1818 Byron's little daughter, Allegra, had been sent from England, under the care of a Swiss nurse too young to undertake her management in such trying circumstances, and after four months of anxiety he placed her in charge of Mrs. Hoppner. In the course of this and the next year there are frequent allusions to the child, all, save one which records a mere affectation of indifference, full of affectionate solicitude. In June, 1819, he writes, "Her temper and her ways, Mr. Hoppner says, are like mine, as well as her features; she will make, in that case, a manageable young lady." Later he talks of her as "flourishing like a pomegranate blossom." In March, 1820, we have another reference. "Allegra is prettier, I think, but as obstinate as a mule, and as ravenous as a vulture; health good to judge by the complexion, temper tolerable but for vanity and pertinacity. She thinks herself handsome, and will do as she pleases." In May he refers to having received a letter from her mother, but gives no details. In the following year, with the approval of the Shelleys, then at Pisa, he placed her for education in the convent of Cavalli Bagni in the Romagna. "I have," he writes to Hoppner, who had thought of having her boarded in Switzerland, "neither spared care, kindness, nor expense, since the child was sent to me. The

people may say what they please. I must content myself with not deserving, in this instance, that they should speak ill. The place is a *country* town, in a good air, and less liable to objections of every kind. It has always appeared to me that the moral defect in Italy does *not* proceed from a *conventual* education; because, to my certain knowledge, they come out of their convents innocent, even to ignorance of moral evil; but to the state of society into which they are directly plunged on coming out of it. It is like educating an infant on a mountain top, and then taking him to the sea and throwing him into it, and desiring him to swim." Elsewhere he says, "I by no means intend to give a natural child an English education, because, with the disadvantages of her birth, her after settlement would be doubly difficult. Abroad, with a fair foreign education, and a portion of 5000*l.* or 6000*l.* (his will leaving her 5000*l.*, on condition that she should not marry an Englishman, is here explained and justified), she might, and may, marry very respectably. In England such a dowry would be a pittance, while elsewhere it is a fortune. It is, besides, my wish that she should be a Roman Catholic, which I look upon as the best religion, as it is assuredly the oldest of the various branches of Christianity." It only remains to add that, when he heard that the child had fallen ill of fever in 1822, Byron was almost speechless with agitation, and, on the news of her death, which took place April 22nd, he seemed at first utterly prostrated. Next day he said, "Allegra is dead; she is more fortunate than we. It is God's will; let us mention it no more." Her remains rest beneath the elm-tree at Harrow which her father used to haunt in boyhood, with the date of birth and death, and the verse—

"I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me."

The most interesting of the visits paid to Byron during the period of his life at Venice was that of Shelley, who, leaving his wife and children at Bagni di Lucca, came to see him in August, 1818. He arrived late, in the midst of a thunder-storm; and next day they sailed to the Lido, and rode together along the sands. The attitude of the two poets towards each other is curious; the comparatively shrewd man of the world often relied on the idealist for guidance and help in practical matters, admired his courage and independence, spoke of him invariably as the best of men, but never paid a sufficiently warm tribute in public to his work. Shelley, on the other hand, certainly the most modest of great poets, contemplates Byron in the fixed attitude of a literary worshipper.

The introduction to *Julian and Maddalo*, directly suggested by this visit, under the slight veil of a change in the name, gives a summary of the view of his friend's character which he continued to entertain. "He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud; he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men; and instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength;" but "in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell."

Subsequently to this visit Byron lent the villa at Este

to his friend, and during the autumn weeks of their residence there were written the lines among the Euganean hills, where, in the same strain of reverence, Shelley refers to the "tempest-cleaving swan of Albion," to the "music flung o'er a mighty thunder-fit," and to the sun-like soul destined to immortalize his ocean refuge—

> "As the ghost of Homer clings
> Round Scamander's wasting springs,
> As divinest Shakspeare's might
> Fills Avon and the world with light."

"The sun," he says, at a later date, "has extinguished the glowworm;" and again, "I despair of rivalling Lord Byron, as well I may; and there is no other with whom it is worth contending."

Shelley was, in the main, not only an exquisite but a trustworthy critic; and no man was more absolutely above being influenced by the fanfaronade of rank or the din of popularity. These criticisms are therefore not to be lightly set aside, nor are they unintelligible. Perhaps those admirers of the clearer and more consistent nature, who exalt him to the rank of a greater poet, are misled by the amiable love of one of the purest characters in the history of our literature. There is at least no difficulty in understanding why he should have been, as it were, concussed by Byron's greater massiveness and energy into a sense—easy to a man half bard, half saint—of inferiority. Similarly, most of the estimates—many already reversed, others reversible—by the men of that age, of each other, can be explained. We can see how it was that Shelley overestimated both the character and the powers of Hunt; and Byron depreciated Keats, and was ultimately repelled by Wordsworth, and held out his hand to meet

the manly grasp of Scott. The one enigma of their criticism is the respect that they joined in paying to the witty, genial, shallow, worldly, musical Tom Moore.

This favourite of fortune and the minor muses, in the course of a short tour through the north of Italy in the autumn of 1819, found his noble friend on the 8th of October at La Mira, went with him on a sight-seeing expedition to Venice, and passed five or six days in his company. Of this visit he has recorded his impressions, some of which relate to his host's personal appearance, others to his habits and leading incidents of his life. Byron "had grown fatter, both in person and face, and the latter had suffered most by the change, having lost by the enlargement of the features some of that refined and spiritualized look that had in other times distinguished it; but although less romantic, he appeared more humorous." They renewed their recollections of the old days and nights in London, and compared them with later experiences of Bores and Blues, in a manner which threatened to put to flight the historical and poetical associations naturally awakened by the City of the Sea. Byron had a rooted dislike to any approach to fine talk in the ordinary intercourse of life; and when his companion began to rhapsodize on the rosy hue of the Italian sunsets, he interrupted him with, "Come, d—n it, Tom, *don't* be poetical." He insisted on Moore, who sighed after what he imagined would be the greater comforts of an hotel, taking up his quarters in his palace; and as they were groping their way through the somewhat dingy entrance, cried out, "Keep clear of the dog!" and a few paces farther, "Take care, or the monkey will fly at you!" an incident recalling the old vagaries of the menagerie at Newstead. The biographer's reminiscences mainly dwell on his lord-

ship's changing moods and tempers and gymnastic exercises, his terror of interviewing strangers, his imperfect appreciation of art, his preference of fish to flesh, his almost parsimonious economy in small matters, mingled with allusions to his domestic calamities, and frequent expressions of a growing distaste to Venetian society. On leaving the city, Moore passed a second afternoon at La Mira, had a glimpse of Allegra, and the first intimation of the existence of the notorious Memoirs. "A short time after dinner Byron left the room, and returned carrying in his hand a white leather bag. 'Look here,' he said, holding it up; 'this would be worth something to Murray, though *you*, I dare say, would not give sixpence for it.' 'What is it?' I asked. 'My life and adventures,' he answered. 'It is not a thing,' he answered, 'that can be published during my lifetime, but you may have it if you like. There, do whatever you please with it.' In taking the bag, and thanking him most warmly, I added, 'This will make a nice legacy for my little Tom, who shall astonish the latter days of the nineteenth century with it.'"[1] Shortly after, Moore for the last time bade his friend farewell, taking with him from Madame Guiccioli, who did the honours of the house, an introduction to her brother, Count Gamba, at Rome. "Theresa Guiccioli," says Cas-

[1] In December, 1820, Byron sent several more sheets of memoranda from Ravenna; and in the following year suggested an arrangement by which Murray paid over to Moore, who was then in difficulties, 2000*l.* for the right of publishing the whole, under the condition, among others, that Lady Byron should see them, and have the right of reply to anything that might seem to her objectionable. She on her part declined to have anything to do with them. When the Memoirs were destroyed, Moore paid back the 2000*l.*, but obtained four thousand guineas for editing the *Life and Correspondence.*

telar, "appears like a star on the stormy horizon of the poet's life." A young Romagnese, the daughter of a nobleman of Ravenna, of good descent but limited means, she had been educated in a convent, and married in her nineteenth year to a rich widower of sixty, in early life a friend of Alfieri, and noted as the patron of the National Theatre. This beautiful blonde, of pleasing manners, graceful presence, and a strong vein of sentiment, fostered by the reading of Chateaubriand, met Byron for the first time casually when she came in her bridal dress to one of the Albrizzi reunions; but she was only introduced to him early in the April of the following year, at the house of the Countess Benzoni. "Suddenly the young Italian found herself inspired with a passion of which till that moment her mind could not have formed the least idea; she had thought of love but as an amusement, and now became its slave." Byron, on the other hand, gave what remained of a heart never alienated from her by any other mistress. Till the middle of the month they met every day; and when the husband took her back to Ravenna she despatched to her idol a series of impassioned letters, declaring her resolution to mould her life in accordance with his wishes. Towards the end of May she had prepared her relatives to receive Byron as a visitor. He started in answer to the summons, writing on his way the beautiful stanzas to the Po, beginning—

> "River that rollest by the ancient walls
> Where dwells the lady of my love."

Again passing through Ferrara, and visiting Bologna, he left the latter on the 8th, and on his arrival at his destination found the Countess dangerously ill; but his presence, and the attentions of the famous Venetian doctor Aglietti,

who was sent for by his advice, restored her. The Count seems to have been proud of his guest. "I can't make him out at all," Byron writes; "he visits me frequently, and takes me out (like Whittington the Lord Mayor) in a coach and six horses. The fact appears to be, that he is completely governed by her—and, for that matter, so am I." Later he speaks of having got his horses from Venice, and riding or driving daily in the scenery reproduced in the third canto of *Don Juan*:—

> "Sweet hour of twilight! in the solitude
> Of the pine forest, and the silent shore
> Which bounds Ravenna's immemorial wood."

On Theresa's recovery, in dread of a possible separation, he proposed to fly with her to America, to the Alps, to "some unsuspected isle in the far seas;" and she suggested the idea of feigning death, like Juliet, and rising from the tomb. Neither expedient was called for. When the Count went to Bologna, in August, with his wife, Lord Byron was allowed to follow; and after consoling himself during an excursion which the married pair made to their estate, by hovering about her empty rooms and writing in her books, he established himself, on the Count's return to his headquarters, with her and Allegra at Bologna. Meanwhile, Byron had written *The Prophecy of Dante*, and in August the prose letter, *To the Editor of the British Review*, on the charge of bribery in *Don Juan*. Than this inimitable epistle no more laughter-compelling composition exists. About the same time, we hear of his leaving the theatre in a convulsion of tears, occasioned by the representation of Alfieri's *Mirra*.

He left Bologna with the Countess on the 15th of September, when they visited the Euganean hills and Arqua,

and wrote their names together in the Pilgrim's Book. On arriving at Venice, the physicians recommending Madame Guiccioli to country air, they settled, still by her husband's consent, for the autumn at La Mira, where Moore and others found them domesticated. At the beginning of November the poet was prostrated by an attack of tertian fever. In some of his hours of delirium he dictated to his careful nurses, Fletcher and the Countess, a number of verses, which she assures us were correct and sensible. He attributes his restoration to cold water and the absence of doctors; but, ere his complete recovery, Count Guiccioli had suddenly appeared on the scene, and run away with his own wife. The lovers had for a time not only to acquiesce in the separation, but to agree to cease their correspondence. In December Byron, in a fit of spleen, had packed up his belongings, with a view to return to England. "He was," we are told, "ready dressed for the journey, his boxes on board the gondola, his gloves and cap on, and even his little cane in his hand, when my lord declares that if it should strike one—which it did—before everything was in order, he would not go that day. It is evident he had not the heart to go." Next day he heard that Madame Guiccioli was again seriously ill, received and accepted the renewed invitation which bound him to her and to the south. He left Venice for the last time almost by stealth, rushed along the familiar roads, and was welcomed at Ravenna.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1820–1821.]

RAVENNA.—DRAMAS.—CAIN.—VISION OF JUDGMENT.

Byron's life at Ravenna was during the first months comparatively calm; nevertheless, he mingled in society, took part in the Carnival, and was received at the parties of the Legate. "I may stay," he writes in January, 1820, "a day—a week—a year—all my life." Meanwhile, he imported his movables from Venice, hired a suite of rooms in the Guiccioli palace, executed his marvellously close translation of Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore*, wrote his version of the story of *Francesca of Rimini*, and received visits from his old friend Bankes and from Sir Humphry Davy. At this time he was accustomed to ride about armed to the teeth, apprehending a possible attack from assassins on the part of Count Guiccioli. In April his letters refer to the insurrectionary movements then beginning against the Holy Alliance. "We are on the verge of a row here. Last night they have over-written all the city walls with 'Up with the Republic!' and 'Death to the Pope!' The police have been searching for the subscribers, but have caught none as yet. The other day they confiscated the whole translation of the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, and have prosecuted the translator." In July a Papal decree of separation between the Countess and her husband was obtained, on condition of the latter paying from

his large income a pittance to the lady of 200*l.* a year, and her undertaking to live in her father's house—an engagement which was, first in the spirit, and subsequently in the letter, violated. For a time, however, she retired to a villa about fifteen miles from Ravenna, where she was visited by Byron at comparatively rare intervals. By the end of July he had finished *Marino Faliero*, and ere the close of the year the fifth canto of *Don Juan*. In September he says to Murray, "I am in a fierce humour at not having Scott's *Monastery*. No more Keats,[1] I entreat. There is no bearing the drivelling idiotism of the manikin. I don't feel inclined to care further about *Don Juan*. What do you think a very pretty Italian lady said to me the other day, when I remarked that 'it would live longer than *Childe Harold?*' 'Ah! but I would rather have the fame of *Childe Harold* for three years than an immortality of *D. J.*'" This is to-day the common female judgment; it is known to have been La Guiccioli's, as well as Mrs. Leigh's, and by their joint persuasion Byron was for a season induced to lay aside "that horrid, wearisome Don." About this time he wrote the memorable reply to the remarks on that poem in *Blackwood's Magazine*, where he enters on a defence of his life, attacks the Lakers, and champions Pope against the new school of poetry, lamenting that his own practice did not square with his precept; and adding, "We are all wrong, except Rogers, Crabbe, and Campbell."

[1] In a note on a similar passage, bearing the date November 12, 1821, he, however, confesses: "My indignation at Mr. Keats' depreciation of Pope has hardly permitted me to do justice to his own genius, which malgré all the fantastic fopperies of his style was undoubtedly of great promise. His fragment of Hyperion seems actually inspired by the Titans, and is as sublime as Æschylus. He is a loss to our literature."

In November he refers to reports of his letters being opened by the Austrian officials, and the unpleasant things the Huns, as he calls them, are likely to find therein. Early in the next month he tells Moore that the commandant of their troops, a brave officer, but obnoxious to the people, had been found lying at his door, with five slugs in him, and, bleeding inwardly, had died in the palace, where he had been brought to be nursed.

This incident is versified in *Don Juan*, v. 33–39, with anatomical minuteness of detail. After trying in vain to wrench an answer out of death, the poet ends in his accustomed strain—

> "But it was all a mystery. Here we are,
> And there we go:—but *where?* Five bits of lead—
> Or three, or two, or one—send very far!"

Assassination has sometimes been the prelude to revolution, but it may be questioned if it has ever promoted the cause of liberty. Most frequently it has served as a pretext for reaction, or a red signal. In this instance—as afterwards in 1848—overt acts of violence made the powers of despotism more alert, and conduced, with the half-hearted action of their adversaries, to the suppression of the rising of 1820–21. Byron's sympathy with the movement seems to have been stimulated by his new associations. Theresa's brother, Count Pietro, an enthusiastic young soldier, having returned from Rome and Naples, surmounting a prejudice not wholly unnatural, became attached to him, and they entered into a partnership in behalf of what—adopting a phrase often flaunted in opposite camps—they called constitutional principles. Finally, the poet so committed himself to the party of insurrection that, though his nationality secured him from

direct attack, his movements were necessarily affected by the fiasco. In July the Gambas were banished from the Romagna, Pietro being actually carried by force over the frontier; and, according to the articles of her separation, the Countess had to follow them to Florence. Byron lingered for some months, partly from a spirit of defiance, and partly from his affection towards a place where he had enlisted the regards of numerous beneficiaries. The Gambas were for some time bent on migrating to Switzerland; but the poet, after first acquiescing, subsequently conceived a violent repugnance to the idea, and early in August wrote to Shelley, earnestly requesting his presence, aid, and counsel. Shelley at once complied, and, entering into a correspondence with Madame Guiccioli, succeeded in inducing her relatives to abandon their transmontane plans, and agree to take up their headquarters at Pisa. This incident gave rise to a series of interesting letters, in which the younger poet gives a vivid and generous account of the surroundings and condition of his friend. On the 2nd of August he writes from Ravenna: "I arrived last night at ten o'clock, and sat up talking with Lord B. till five this morning. He was delighted to see me. He has, in fact, completely recovered his health, and lives a life totally the reverse of that which he led at Venice. . . . Poor fellow! he is now quite well, and immersed in politics and literature. We talked a great deal of poetry and such matters last night, and, as usual, differed, I think, more than ever. He affects to patronize a system of criticism fit only for the production of mediocrity; and, although all his finer poems and passages have been produced in defiance of this system, yet I recognize the pernicious effects of it in the *Doge of Venice*." Again, on the 15th: "Lord B. is greatly improved in every respect—in

genius, in temper, in moral views, in health and happiness. His connexion with La Guiccioli has been an inestimable benefit to him. He lives in considerable splendour, but within his income, which is now about 4000*l.* a year, 1000*l.* of which he devotes to purposes of charity. Switzerland is little fitted for him; the gossip and the cabals of those Anglicised coteries would torment him as they did before. Ravenna is a miserable place. He would in every respect be better among the Tuscans. He has read to me one of the unpublished cantos of *Don Juan*. It sets him not only above, but far above, all the poets of the day. Every word has the stamp of immortality. . . . I have spoken to him of Hunt, but not with a direct view of demanding a contribution. I am sure, if I asked, it would not be refused; yet there is something in me that makes it impossible. Lord B. and I are excellent friends; and were I reduced to poverty, or were I a writer who had no claim to a higher position than I possess, I would freely ask him any favour. Such is not now the case." Later, after stating that Byron had decided upon Tuscany, he says, in reference to La Guiccioli: "At the conclusion of a letter, full of all the fine things she says she has heard of me, is this request, which I transcribe: 'Signore, la vostra bontà mi fa ardita di chiedervi un favore, me lo accordarete voi? *Non partite da Ravenna senza milord.*' Of course, being now by all the laws of knighthood captive to a lady's request, I shall only be at liberty on my parole until Lord Byron is settled at Pisa."

Shelley took his leave, after a visit of ten days' duration, about the 17th or 18th of April. In a letter, dated August 26, he mentions having secured for his lordship the Palazzo Lanfranchi, an old spacious building on the Lung' Arno, once the family residence of the destroyers of Ugo-

lino, and still said to be haunted by their ghosts. Towards the close of October, he says they have been expecting him any day these six weeks. Byron, however, did not leave till the morning of the 29th. On his road, there occurred at Imola the accidental meeting with Lord Clare. Clare—who on this occasion merely crossed his friend's path on his way to Rome—at a later date came on purpose from Geneva before returning to England to visit the poet, who, then at Leghorn, recorded in a letter to Moore his sense of this proof of old affection undecayed. At Bologna—his next stage—he met Rogers by appointment, and the latter has preserved his memory of the event in well-known lines. Together they revisited Florence and its galleries, where they were distracted by the crowds of sight-seeing visitors. Byron must have reached Pisa not later than the 2nd of November (1821), for his first letter from there bears the date of the 3rd.

The later months of the poet's life at Ravenna were marked by intense literary activity. Over a great part of the year was spread the controversy with Bowles about Pope, *i. e.*, between the extremes of Art against Nature, and Nature against Art. It was a controversy for the most part free from personal animus, and on Byron's part the genuine expression of a reaction against a reaction. To this year belong the greater number of the poet's Historical Dramas. What was said of these at the time by Jeffrey, Heber, and others, was said with justice; it is seldom that the criticism of our day finds so little to reverse in that of sixty years ago.

The author, having shown himself capable of being pathetic, sarcastic, sentimental, comical, and sublime, we would be tempted to think that he had written these plays to show, what no one before suspected, that he could also

be dull, were it not for his own exorbitant estimation of them. Lord Byron had few of the powers of a great dramatist; he had little architectural imagination, or capacity to conceive and build up a whole. His works are mainly masses of fine, splendid, or humorous writing, heaped together; the parts are seldom forged into one, or connected by any indissoluble link. His so-called Dramas are only poems divided into chapters. Further, he had little of what Mr. Ruskin calls Penetrative Imagination. So it has been plausibly said that he made his men after his own image, his women after his own heart. The former are, indeed, rather types of what he wished to be than what he was. They are better, and worse, than himself. They have stronger wills, more definite purposes, but less genial and less versatile natures. But it remains true, that when he tried to represent a character totally different from himself, the result is either unreal or uninteresting. *Marino Faliero*, begun April, finished July, 1820, and prefixed by a humorous dedication to Goethe—which was, however, suppressed—was brought on the stage of Drury Lane Theatre early in 1821, badly mangled, appointed, and acted—and damned.

Byron seems to have been sincere in saying he did not intend any of his plays to be represented. We are more inclined to accuse him of self-deception when he asserts that he did not mean them to be popular; but he took sure means to prevent them from being so. *Marino Faliero*, in particular, was pronounced by Dr. John Watkins —old Grobius himself—"to be the dullest of dull plays;" and even the warmest admirers of the poet had to confess that the style was cumbrous. The story may be true, but it is none the less unnatural. The characters are comparatively commonplace, the women especially being mere

shadows; the motion is slow; and the inevitable passages of fine writing are, as the extolled soliloquy of Lioni, rather rhetorical than imaginative. The speeches of the Doge are solemn, but prolix, if not ostentatious, and — perhaps the vital defect—his cause fails to enlist our sympathies. Artistically, this play was Byron's most elaborate attempt to revive the unities and other restrictions of the severe style, which, when he wrote, had been "vanquished in literature." "I am persuaded," he writes in the preface, "that a great tragedy is not to be produced by following the old dramatists, who are full of faults, but by producing regular dramas like the Greeks." He forgets that the statement in the mouth of a Greek dramatist that his play was not intended for the stage, would have been a confession of failure; and that Aristotle had admitted that even the Deity could not make the Past present. The ethical motives of Faliero are, first, the cry for vengeance—the feeling of affronted or unsatiated pride—that runs through so much of the author's writing; and, second, the enthusiasm for public ends, which was beginning to possess him. The following lines have been pointed out as embodying some of Byron's spirit of protest against the mere selfish "greasy domesticity" of the Georgian era:—

I. Ber. "Such ties are not
For those who are called to the high destinies
Which purify corrupted commonwealths:
We must forget all feelings save the one,
We must resign all passions save our purpose,
We must behold no object save our country,
And only look on death as beautiful
So that the sacrifice ascend to heaven,
And draw down freedom on her evermore.

Cal. "But if we fail—?

I. BER. "They never fail who die
In a great cause: the block may soak their gore;
Their heads may sodden in the sun; their limbs
Be strung to city gates and castle walls,
But still their spirit walks abroad"

—a passage which, after his wont, he spoils by platitudes about the precisian Brutus, who certainly did not give Rome liberty.

Byron's other Venetian Drama, the *Two Foscari*, composed at Ravenna, between the 11th of June and the 10th of July, 1821, and published in the following December, is another record of the same failure and the same mortification, due to the same causes. In this play, as Jeffrey points out, the preservation of the unities had a still more disastrous effect. The author's determination to avoid rant did not hinder his frequently adopting an inflated style; while professing to follow the ancient rules, he forgets the warning of Horace so far as to permit the groans of the tortured Foscari to be heard on the stage. The declamations of Marina produce no effect on the action, and the vindictiveness of Loridano, though effectively pointed in the closing words, "He has paid me," is not rendered interesting, either by a well established injury, or by any trace of Iago's subtle genius.

In the same volume appeared *Sardanapalus*, written in the previous May, and dedicated to Goethe. In this play, which marks the author's last reversion to the East, we are more arrested by the majesty of the theme—

"Thirteen hundred years
Of empire ending like a shepherd's tale"—

by the grandeur of some of the passages, and by the development of the chief character, made more vivid by its

being distinctly autobiographical. Sardanapalus himself is Harold, raised "high on a throne," and rousing himself at the close from a life of effeminate lethargy. Myrrha has been often identified with La Guiccioli, and the hero's relation to his Queen Zarina compared with that of the poet to his wife; but in his portrait of the former the author's defective capacity to represent national character is manifest: Myrrha is only another Gulnare, Medora, or Zuleika. In the domestic play of *Werner* — completed at Pisa in January, 1822, and published in November—there is no merit either of plan or execution; for the plot is taken, with little change, from "The German's Tale," written by Harriet Lee, and the treatment is throughout prosaic. Byron was never a master of blank verse; but *Werner*, his sole success on the modern British stage, is written in a style fairly parodied by Campbell, when he cut part of the author's preface into lines, and pronounced them as good as any in the play.

The *Deformed Transformed*, another adaptation, suggested by a forgotten novel called *The Three Brothers*, with reminiscences of *Faust*, and possibly of Scott's *Black Dwarf*, was begun at Pisa in 1821, but not published till January, 1824. This fragment owes its interest to the bitter infusion of personal feeling in the first scene, and its occasional charm to the march of some of the lines, especially those describing the Bourbon's advance on Rome; but the effect of the magical element is killed by previous parallels, while the story is chaotic and absurd. The *Deformed Transformed* bears somewhat the same relation to *Manfred*, as *Heaven and Earth*—an occasionally graphic dream of the world before the Deluge, written October, 1821, and issued about the same time as Moore's *Loves of the Angels*, on a similar theme—does to *Cain*. The last

named, begun in July, and finished at Ravenna in September, is the author's highest contribution to the metaphysical poetry of the century. In *Cain* Byron grapples with the perplexities of a belief which he never either accepted or rejected, and with the yet deeper problems of life and death, of good and ill. In dealing with these, his position is not that of one justifying the ways of God to man—though he somewhat disingenuously appeals to Milton in his defence—nor that of the definite antagonism of *Queen Mab*. The distinction in this respect between Byron and Shelley cannot be over-emphasized. The latter had a firm faith other than that commonly called Christian. The former was, in the proper sense of the word, a sceptic, beset with doubts, and seeking for a solution which he never found, shifting in his expression of them with every change of a fickle and inconsistent temperament. The atmosphere of *Cain* is almost wholly negative; for under the guise of a drama, which is mainly a dialogue between two halves of his mind, the author appears to sweep aside with something approaching to disdain the answers of a blindly accepted tradition, or of a superficial optimism, *e. g.*—

> CAIN. "Then my father's God did well
> When he prohibited the fatal tree.
> LUCIFER. "But had done better in not planting it."

Again, a kid, after suffering agonies from the sting of a reptile, is restored by antidotes—

> "Behold, my son! said Adam, how from evil
> Springs good!
> LUCIFER. "What didst thou answer?
> CAIN. "Nothing; for
> He is my father; but I thought that 'twere
> A better portion for the animal
> Never to have been stung at all."

This rebellious nature naturally yields to the arguments of Lucifer, a spirit in which much of the grandeur of Milton's Satan is added to the subtlety of Mephistopheles. In the first scene Cain is introduced, rebelling against toils imposed on him by an offence committed before he was born—"I sought not to be born"—the answer, that toil is a good, being precluded by its authoritative representation as a punishment; in which mood he is confirmed by the entrance and reasonings of the Tempter, who identifies the Deity with Seva the Destroyer, hints at the dreadful visitation of the yet untasted death; when Adah, entering, takes him at first for an angel, and then recognizes him as a fiend. Her invocation to Eve, and comparison of the "heedless, harmless, wantonness of bliss" in Eden, to the later lot of those girt about with demons from whose fascination they cannot fly, is one of the most striking in the drama; as is the line put into the mouth of the poet's most beautiful female character, to show that God cannot be alone—

> "What else can joy be, but diffusing joy?"

Her subsequent contrast of Lucifer with the other angels is more after the style of Shelley than anything else in Byron—

> "As the silent sunny moon,
> All light, they look upon us. But thou seem'st
> Like an ethereal night, where long white clouds
> Streak the deep purple, and unnumber'd stars
> Spangle the wonderful mysterious vault
> With things that look as if they would be suns—
> So beautiful, unnumber'd, and endearing;
> Not dazzling, and yet drawing us to them,
> They fill my eyes with tears, and so dost thou."

The flight with Lucifer, in the second act, in the abyss of space and through the Hades of "uncreated night,"

with the vision of long-wrecked worlds, and the "interminable gloomy realms

> "Of swimming shadows and enormous shapes"

—suggested, as the author tells us, by the reading of Cuvier—leaves us with impressions of grandeur and desolation which no other passages of English poetry can convey. Lord Byron has elsewhere exhibited more versatility of fancy and richness of illustration, but nowhere else has he so nearly "struck the stars." From constellation to constellation the pair speed on, cleaving the blue with mighty wings, but finding in all a blank, like that in Richter's wonderful dream. The result on the mind of Cain is summed in the lines on the fatal tree—

> "It was a lying tree—for we *know* nothing;
> At least, it *promised knowledge* at the price
> Of death—but *knowledge* still; but what *knows* man?"

A more modern poet answers, after beating at the same iron gates, "Behold, we know not anything." The most beautiful remaining passage is Cain's reply to the question —what is more beautiful to him than all that he has seen in the "unimaginable ether?"—

> "My sister Adah.—All the stars of heaven,
> The deep blue noon of night, lit by an orb
> Which looks a spirit, or a spirit's world—
> The hues of twilight—the sun's gorgeous coming—
> His setting indescribable, which fills
> My eyes with pleasant tears as I behold
> Him sink, and feel my heart flow softly with him
> Along that western paradise of clouds—
> The forest shade—the green bough—the bird's voice—
> The vesper bird's, which seems to sing of love,
> And mingles with the song of cherubim,

As the day closes over Eden's walls:—
All these are nothing, to my eyes and heart,
Like Adah's face."

Lucifer's speech at the close of the act is perhaps too Miltonic to be absolutely original. Returning to earth, we have a pastoral, of which Sir Egerton Brydges justly and sufficiently remarks, "The censorious may say what they will, but there are speeches in the mouth of Cain and Adah, especially regarding their child, which nothing in English poetry but the 'wood-notes wild' of Shakspeare ever equalled." Her cry, as Cain seems to threaten the infant, followed by the picture of his bloom and joy, is a touch of perfect pathos. Then comes the interview with the pious Abel, who is amazed at the lurid light in the eyes of his brother, with the spheres "singing in thunder round" him—the two sacrifices, the murder, the shriek of Zillah—

"Father! Eve!
Adah! come hither! Death is in the world;"

Cain's rallying from stupor—

"I am awake at last—a dreary dream
Had madden'd me,—but he shall never wake:"

the curse of Eve; and the close—*μεῖζον ἢ κατὰ δάκρυα*—

CAIN. "Leave me.
ADAH. "Why all have left thee.
CAIN. "And wherefore lingerest thou? Dost thou not fear?
ADAH. "I fear
Nothing except to leave thee.

* * * * * * *

CAIN. "Eastward from Eden will we take our way.
ADAH. "Leave! thou shalt be my guide; and may our God
Be thine! Now let us carry forth our children.

CAIN. "And *he* who lieth there was childless. I
Have dried the fountain of a gentle race.
O Abel!
ADAH. "Peace be with him.
CAIN. "But with *me!*"

Cain, between which and the *Cenci* lies the award of the greatest single performance in dramatic shape of our century, raised a storm. It was published, with *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*, in December, 1821, and the critics soon gave evidence of the truth of Elze's remark—"In England freedom of action is cramped by the want of freedom of thought. The converse is the case with us Germans; freedom of thought is restricted by the want of freedom in action. To us this scepticism presents nothing in the least fearful." But with us it appeared as if a literary Guy Fawkes had been detected in the act of blowing up half the cathedrals and all the chapels of the country. The rage of insular orthodoxy was in proportion to its impotence. Every scribbler with a cassock denounced the book and its author, though few attemped to answer him. The hubbub was such that Byron wrote to Murray, authorizing him to disclaim all responsibility, and offering to refund the payment he had received. "Say that both you and Mr. Gifford remonstrated. I will come to England to stand trial. 'Me me adsum qui feci'"—and much to the same effect. The book was pirated; and on the publisher's application to have an injunction, Lord Eldon refused to grant it. The majority of the minor reviewers became hysterical, and Dr. Watkins, amid much almost inarticulate raving, said that Sir Walter Scott, who had gratefully accepted the dedication, would go down to posterity with the brand of *Cain* upon his brow. Several even of the higher crit-

ics took fright. Jeffrey, while protesting his appreciation of the literary merits of the work, lamented its tendency to unsettle faith. Mr. Campbell talked of its "frightful audacity." Bishop Heber wrote at great length to prove that its spirit was more dangerous than that of *Paradise Lost* — and succeeded. The *Quarterly* began to cool towards the author. Moore wrote to him, that Cain was "wonderful, terrible, never to be forgotten," but "dreaded and deprecated" the influence of Shelley. Byron showed the letter to Shelley, who wrote to a common friend to assure Mr. Moore that he had not the smallest influence over his lordship in matters of religion, and only wished he had, as he would "employ it to eradicate from his great mind the delusions of Christianity, which seem perpetually to recur, and to lie in ambush for the hours of sickness and distress." Shelley elsewhere writes: "What think you of Lord B.'s last volume? In my opinion it contains finer poetry than has appeared in England since *Paradise Lost.* Cain is apocalyptic; it is a revelation not before communicated to man." In the same strain, Scott says of the author of the "grand and tremendous drama:" "He has certainly matched Milton on his own ground." The worst effect of those attacks appears in the shifts to which Byron resorted to explain himself — to be imputed, however, not to cowardice, but to his wavering habit of mind. Great writers in our country have frequently stirred difficult questions in religion and life, and then seemed to be half scared, like Rouget de Lisle, by the reverberation of their own voices. Shelley almost alone was always ready to declare, "I meant what I said, and stand to it."

Byron having, with or without design, arraigned some of the Thirty-nine Articles of his countrymen, proceeded

in the following month (October, 1821) to commit an outrage, yet more keenly resented, on the memory of their sainted king, the pattern of private virtue and public vice, George III. The perpetration of this occurred in the course of the last of his numerous literary duels, of which it was the close. That Mr. Southey was a well-meaning and independent man of letters there can be no doubt. It does not require the conclusive testimony of the esteem of Savage Landor to compel our respect for the author of the *Life of Nelson*, and the open-handed friend of Coleridge; nor is it any disparagement that, with the last-named and with Wordsworth, he in middle life changed his political and other opinions. But in his dealings with Lord Byron, Southey had "eaten of the insane root." He attacked a man of incomparably superior powers, for whom his utter want of humour—save in its comparatively childish forms—made him a ludicrously unequal match, and paid the penalty in being gibbeted in satires that will endure with the language. The strife, which seems to have begun on Byron's leaving England, rose to its height when his lordship, in the humorous observations and serious defence of his character against "the Remarks" in Blackwood, 1819 (August), accused the Laureate of apostasy, treason, and slander.

In 1821, when the latter published his *Vision of Judgment*—the most quaintly preposterous panegyric ever penned—he prefixed to it a long explanatory note, in the course of which he characterizes *Don Juan* as a "monstrous combination of horror and mockery, lewdness and impiety," regrets that it has not been brought under the lash of the law, salutes the writer as chief of the Satanic school, inspired by the spirits of Moloch and Belial, and refers to the remorse that will overtake him

on his death-bed. To which Byron, *inter alia:* "Mr. Southey, with a cowardly ferocity, exults over the anticipated death-bed repentance of the objects of his dislike, and indulges himself in a pleasant 'Vision of Judgment,' in prose as well as verse, full of impious impudence. What Mr. Southey's sensations or ours may be in the awful moment of leaving this state of existence, neither he nor we can pretend to decide. In common, I presume, with most men of any reflection, *I* have not waited for a death-bed to repent of many of my actions, notwithstanding the 'diabolical pride' which this pitiful renegado in his rancour would impute to those who scorn him." This dignified, though trenchant, rejoinder would have been unanswerable; but the writer goes on to charge the Laureate with spreading calumnies. To this charge Southey, in January, 1822, replies with "a direct and positive denial," and then proceeds to talk at large of the "whip and branding iron," "slaves of sensuality," "stones from slings," "Goliaths," "public panders," and what not, in the manner of the brave days of old.

In February, Byron, having seen this assault in the *Courier*, writes off in needless heat, "I have got Southey's pretended reply; what remains to be done is to call him out"—and despatches a cartel of mortal defiance. Mr. Douglas Kinnaird, through whom this was sent, judiciously suppressed it, and the author's thirst for literary blood was destined to remain unquenched. Meanwhile he had written his own *Vision of Judgment.* This extraordinary work, having been refused by both Murray and Longman, appeared in 1822 in the pages of the *Liberal.* It passed the bounds of British endurance; and the publisher, Mr. John Hunt, was prosecuted and fined for the publication.

Readers of our day will generally admit that the "gouty

hexameters" of the original poem, which celebrates the apotheosis of King George in heaven, are much more blasphemous than the *ottava rima* of the travesty, which professes to narrate the difficulties of his getting there. Byron's *Vision of Judgment* is as unmistakably the first of parodies as the *Iliad* is the first of epics, or the *Pilgrim's Progress* the first of allegories. In execution it is almost perfect. *Don Juan* is in scope and magnitude a far wider work; but no considerable series of stanzas in *Don Juan* are so free from serious artistic flaw. From first to last, every epithet hits the white; every line that does not convulse with laughter stings or lashes. It rises to greatness by the fact that, underneath all its lambent buffoonery, it is aflame with righteous wrath. Nowhere in such space, save in some of the prose of Swift, is there in English so much scathing satire.

CHAPTER IX.

[1821–1823.]

PISA.—GENOA.—DON JUAN.

Byron, having arrived at Pisa with his troop of carriages, horses, dogs, fowls, monkeys, and servants, settled himself quietly in the Palazzo Lanfranchi for ten months, interrupted only by a sojourn of six weeks in the neighbourhood of Leghorn. His life in the old feudal building followed in the main the tenour of his life at Ravenna. He rose late, received visitors in the afternoons, played billiards, rode or practised with his pistols in concert with Shelley, whom he refers to at this time as "the most companionable man under thirty" he had ever met. Both poets were good shots, but Byron the safest; for, though his hand often shook, he made allowance for the vibration, and never missed his mark. On one occasion he set up a slender cane, and at twenty paces divided it with his bullet. The early part of the evening he gave to a frugal meal and the society of La Guiccioli — now apparently, in defiance of the statute of limitations, established under the same roof—and then sat late over his verses. He was disposed to be more sociable than at Venice or Ravenna, and occasionally entertained strangers; but his intimate acquaintanceship was confined to Captain Williams and his wife, and Shelley's cousin, Captain Medwin. The lat-

ter used frequently to dine and sit with his host till the morning, collecting materials for the *Conversations* which he afterwards gave to the world. The value of these reminiscences is impaired by the fact of their recording, as serious revelations, the absurd confidences in which the poet's humour for mystification was wont to indulge. Another of the group, an Irishman, called Taafe, is made, in his lordship's correspondence of the period, to cut a somewhat comical figure. The master-passion of this worthy and genial fellow was to get a publisher for a fair commentary on Dante, to which he had firmly linked a very bad translation, and for about six months Byron pesters Murray with constant appeals to satisfy him; *e. g.*, November 16, "He must be gratified, though the reviewers will make him suffer more tortures than there are in his original." March 6, "He will die if he is not published; he will be damned if he is; but that he don't mind." March 8, "I make it a point that he shall be in print; it will make the man so exuberantly happy. He is such a good-natured Christian that we must give him a shove through the press. Besides, he has had another fall from his horse into a ditch." Taafe, whose horsemanship was on a par with his poetry, can hardly have been consulted as to the form assumed by these apparently fruitless recommendations, so characteristic of the writer's frequent kindliness and constant love of mischief. About this time Byron received a letter from Mr. Shepherd, a gentleman in Somersetshire, referring to the death of his wife, among whose papers he had found the record of a touching, because evidently heart-felt, prayer for the poet's reformation, conversion, and restored peace of mind. To this letter he at once returned an answer, marked by much of the fine feeling of his best moods. Pisa, December 8:

"Sir, I have received your letter. I need not say that the extract which it contains has affected me, because it would imply a want of all feeling to have read it with indifference. . . . Your brief and simple picture of the excellent person, whom I trust you will again meet, cannot be contemplated without the admiration due to her virtues and her pure and unpretending piety. I do not know that I ever met with anything so unostentatiously beautiful. Indisputably, the firm believers in the Gospel have a great advantage over all others—for this simple reason, that if true they will have their reward hereafter; and if there be no hereafter, they can but be with the infidel in his eternal sleep. . . . But a man's creed does not depend upon *himself:* who can say, I *will* believe this, that, or the other? and least of all that which he least can comprehend. . . . I can assure you that not all the fame which ever cheated humanity into higher notions of its own importance would ever weigh in my mind against the pure and pious interest which a virtuous being may be pleased to take in my behalf. In this point of view I would not exchange the prayer of the deceased in my behalf for the united glory of Homer, Cæsar, and Napoleon."

The letter to Lady Byron, which he afterwards showed to Lady Blessington, must have borne about the same date; and we have a further indication of his thoughts reverting homeward in an urgent request to Murray—written on December 10th, Ada's sixth birthday—to send his daughter's miniature. After its arrival nothing gave him greater pleasure than to be told of its strong likeness to himself. In the course of the same month an event occurred which strangely illustrates the manners of the place, and the character of the two poets. An unfortunate fanatic having taken it into his head to steal the wafer-box

out of a church at Lucca, and being detected, was, in accordance with the ecclesiastical law till lately maintained against sacrilege, condemned to be burnt alive. Shelley, who believed that the sentence would really be carried into effect, proposed to Byron that they should gallop off together, and by aid of their servants rescue by force the intended victim. Byron, however, preferred, in the first place, to rely on diplomacy; some vigorous letters passed; ultimately a representation, conveyed by Taafe to the English Ambassador, led to a commutation of the sentence, and the man was sent to the galleys.

The January of 1822 was marked by the addition to the small circle of Captain E. J. Trelawny, the famous rover and bold free-lance (now sole survivor of the remarkable group), who accompanied Lord Byron to Greece, and has recorded a variety of incidents of the last months of his life. Trelawny, who appreciated Shelley with an intensity that is often apt to be exclusive, saw, or has reported, for the most part the weaker side of Byron. We are constrained to accept as correct the conjecture that his judgment was biassed by their rivalry in physical prowess, and the political differences which afterwards developed between them. Letters to his old correspondents — to Scott about the *Waverleys*, to Murray about the Dramas, and the *Vision of Judgment*, and *Cain*—make up almost the sole record of the poet's pursuits during the five following months. On February 6 he sent, through Mr. Kinnaird, the challenge to Southey, of the suppression of which he was not aware till May 17. The same letter contains a sheaf of the random cynicisms, as—"Cash is virtue," "Money is power; and when Socrates said he knew nothing, he meant he had not a drachma"—by which he sharpened the shafts of his assailants. A little later, on

occasion of the death of Lady Noel, he expresses himself with natural bitterness on hearing that she had in her will recorded a wish against his daughter Ada seeing his portrait. In March he sat, along with La Guiccioli, to the sculptor Bartolini. On the 24th, when the company were on one of their riding excursions outside the town, a half-drunken dragoon on horseback broke through them, and by accident or design knocked Shelley from his seat. Byron, pursuing him along the Lung' Arno, called for his name, and, taking him for an officer, flung his glove. The sound of the fray brought the servants of the Lanfranchi to the door; and one of them, it was presumed—though in the scuffle everything remained uncertain—seriously wounded the dragoon in the side. An investigation ensued, as the result of which the Gambas were ultimately exiled from Tuscany, and the party of friends was practically broken up. Shelley and his wife, with the Williamses and Trelawny, soon after settled at the Villa Magni at Lerici, in the Gulf of Spezia. Byron, with the Countess and her brother, established themselves in the Villa Rossa, at Monte Nero, a suburb of Leghorn, from which port at this date the remains of Allegra were conveyed to England.

Among the incidents of this residence were, the homage paid to the poet by a party of Americans; the painting of his portrait and that of La Guiccioli by their compatriot, West, who has left a pleasing account of his visits; Byron's letter making inquiry about the country of Bolivar (where it was his fancy to settle); and another of those disturbances by which he seemed destined to be harassed. One of his servants—among whom were unruly spirits, apparently selected with a kind of *Corsair* bravado—had made an assault on Count Pietro, wounding him in the face. This outburst, though followed by tears

and penitence, confirmed the impression of the Tuscan police that the whole company were dangerous, and made the Government press for their departure. In the midst of the uproar, there suddenly appeared at the villa Mr. Leigh Hunt, with his wife and six children. They had taken passage to Genoa, where they were received by Trelawny, in command of the "Bolivar"—a yacht constructed in that port for Lord Byron, simultaneously with the "Don Juan" for Shelley. The latter, on hearing of the arrival of his friends, came to meet them at Leghorn, and went with them to Pisa. Early in July they were all established on the Lung' Arno, having assigned to them the ground-floor of the palazzo.

We have now to deal briefly—amid conflicting asseverations it is hard to deal fairly—with the last of the vexatiously controverted episodes which need perplex our narrative. Byron, in wishing Moore from Ravenna a merry Christmas for 1820, proposes that they shall embark together in a newspaper, "with some improvement on the plan of the present scoundrels," "to give the age some new lights on policy, poesy, biography, criticism, morality, theology," &c. Moore absolutely refusing to entertain the idea, Hunt's name was brought forward in connexion with it, during the visit of Shelley. Shortly after the return of the latter to Pisa, he writes (August 26) to Hunt, stating that Byron was anxious to start a periodical work, to be conducted in Italy, and had proposed that they should both go shares in the concern, on which follow some suggestions of difficulties about money. Nevertheless, in August, 1821, he presses Hunt to come. Moore, on the other hand, strongly remonstrates against the project. "I heard some days ago that Leigh Hunt was on his way to you with all his family; and the idea seems to be that you and

he and Shelley are to conspire together in the *Examiner*. I deprecate such a plan with all my might. Partnerships in fame, like those in trade, make the strongest party answer for the rest. I tremble even for you with such a bankrupt Co.! You must stand alone." Shelley — who had in the meantime given his bond to Byron for an advance of 200*l*. towards the expenses of his friends, besides assisting them himself to the utmost of his power—began, shortly before their arrival, to express grave doubts as to the success of the alliance. His last published letter, written July 5, 1822, after they had settled at Pisa, is full of forebodings. On the 8th he set sail in the "Don Juan"—

> "That fatal and perfidious bark,
> Built in th' eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,"

and was overtaken by the storm in which he perished. Three days after, Trelawny rode to Pisa, and told Byron of his fears, when the poet's lips quivered, and his voice faltered. On the 22nd of July the bodies of Shelley, Williams, and Vivian were cast ashore. On the 16th August, Hunt, Byron, and Trelawny were present at the terribly weird cremation, which they have all described, and after which they were seized with a fit of the hilarious delirium which is one of the phases of the tension of grief. Byron's references to the event are expressions less of the loss which he indubitably felt, than of his indignation at the "world's wrong." "Thus," he writes, "there is another man gone, about whom the world was ill-naturedly and ignorantly and brutally mistaken. It will, perhaps, do him justice now, when he can be no better for it." Towards the end of the same letter the spirit of his dead friend seems to inspire the sentence—"With these things and these fellows it is necessary, in the present clash of

philosophy and tyranny, to throw away the scabbard. I know it is against fearful odds, but the battle must be fought."

Meanwhile, shortly after the new settlement at the Lanfranchi, the preparations for issuing the *Liberal*—edited by Leigh Hunt in Italy, and published by John Hunt in London—progressed. The first number, which appeared in September, was introduced, after a few words of preface, by the *Vision of Judgment*, with the signature, Quevedo Redivivus, and adorned by Shelley's translation of the "May-Day Night," in *Faust*. It contained, besides, the *Letter to the Editor of my Grandmother's Review*, an indifferent Florentine story, a German apologue, and a gossipping account of Pisa, presumably by Hunt. Three others followed, containing Byron's *Heaven and Earth*, his translation of the *Morgante Maggiore*, and *The Blues*—a very slight, if not silly, satire on literary ladies; some of Shelley's posthumous minor poems, among them "I arise from dreams of thee," and a few of Hazlitt's essays, including, however, none of his best. Leigh Hunt himself wrote most of the rest, one of his contributions being a palpable imitation of *Don Juan*, entitled the *Book of Beginnings;* but he confesses that, owing to his weak health and low spirits at the time, none of these did justice to his ability; and the general manner of the magazine being insufficiently vigorous to carry off the frequent eccentricity of its matter, the prejudices against it prevailed, and the enterprise came to an end. Partners in failing concerns are apt to dispute; in this instance the unpleasantness which arose at the time rankled in the mind of the survivor, and gave rise to his singularly tasteless and injudicious book—a performance which can be only in part condoned by the fact of Hunt's afterwards expressing regret,

and practically withdrawing it. He represents himself throughout as a much-injured man, lured to Italy by misrepresentations that he might give the aid of his journalistic experience and undeniable talents to the advancement of a mercenary enterprise, and that when it failed he was despised, insulted, and rejected. Byron, on the other hand, declares, "The Hunts pressed me to engage in this work, and in an evil hour I consented;" and his subsequent action in the matter—if not always gentle, never unjust—goes to verify his statements in the letters of the period. "I am afraid," he writes from Genoa, October 9, 1822, "the journal is a bad business. I have done all I can for Leigh Hunt since he came here; but it is almost useless. His wife is ill, his six children not very tractable, and in the affairs of this world he himself is a child." Later he says to Murray, "You and your friends, by your injudicious rudeness, cement a connexion which you strove to prevent, and which, had the Hunts prospered, would not in all probability have continued. As it is . . . I can't leave them among the breakers." On February 20 we have his last word on the subject, to the same effect.

In the following sentences Moore seems to give a fair statement of the motives which led to the establishment of the unfortunate journal: "The chief inducements on the part of Lord Byron to this unworthy alliance were, in the first place, a wish to second the kind views of his friend Shelley in inviting Mr. Hunt to Italy; and in the next, a desire to avail himself of the aid of one so experienced as an editor in the favourite object he has so long contemplated of a periodical work in which all the offspring of his genius might be received as they sprung to light." For the accomplishment of this purpose Mr. Leigh Hunt was a singularly ill-chosen associate. A man of

Radical opinions on all matters, not only of religion but of society—opinions which he acquired and held easily but firmly—could never recognize the propriety of the claim to deference which "the noble poet" was always too eager to assert, and was inclined to take liberties which his patron perhaps superciliously repelled. Mrs. Hunt does not seem to have been a very judicious person. "Trelawny here," said Byron, jocularly, "has been speaking against my morals." "It is the first time I ever heard of them," she replied. Mr. Hunt, by his own admission, had "peculiar notions on the subject of money." Byron, on his part, was determined not to be "put upon," and doled out through his steward stated allowances to Hunt, who says that only "stern necessity and a large family" induced him to accept them. Hunt's expression that the 200*l.* was, *in the first instance*, a debt to Shelley, points to the conclusion that it was remitted on that poet's death. Besides this, Byron maintained the family till they left Genoa for Florence, in 1823, and defrayed up to that date all their expenses. He gave his contributions to the *Liberal* gratis; and, again by Hunt's own confession, left to him and his brother the profits of the proprietorship. According to Mr. Galt, "The whole extent of the pecuniary obligation appears not to have exceeded 500*l.*; but, little or great, the manner in which it was recollected reflects no credit either on the head or heart of the debtor."

Of the weaknesses on which the writer—bent on verifying Pope's lines on Atossa—from his vantage in the ground-floor, was enabled to dilate, many are but slightly magnified. We are told, for instance, in very many words, that Byron clung to the privileges of his rank while wishing to seem above them; that he had a small library, and was a one-sided critic; that Bayle and Gibbon supplied

him with the learning he had left at school; that, being a good rider with a graceful seat, he liked to be told of it; that he showed letters he ought not to have shown; that he pretended to think worse of Wordsworth than he did; that he knew little of art or music, adored Rossini, and called Rubens a dauber; that, though he wrote *Don Juan* under gin and water, he had not a strong head, &c., &c. It is true, but not new. But when Hunt proceeds to say that Byron had no sentiment; that La Guiccioli did not really care much about him; that he admired Gifford because he was a sycophant, and Scott because he loved a lord; that he had no heart for anything except a feverish notoriety; that he was a miser from his birth, and had "as little regard for liberty as Alfieri"—it is new enough, but it is manifestly not true. Hunt's book, which begins with a caricature on the frontispiece, and is inspired in the main by uncharitableness, yet contains here and there gleams of a deeper insight than we find in all the volumes of Moore—an insight which, in spite of his irritated egotism, is the mark of a man with the instincts of a poet, with some cosmopolitan sympathies, and a courage on occasion to avow them at any risk. "Lord Byron," he says truly, "has been too much admired by the English because he was sulky and wilful, and reflected in his own person their love of dictation and excitement. They owe his memory a greater regard, and would do it much greater honour, if they admired him for letting them know they were not so perfect a nation as they supposed themselves, and that they might take as well as give lessons of humanity, by a candid comparison of notes with civilization at large."

In July, when at Leghorn, the Gambas received orders to leave Tuscany; and on his return to Pisa, Byron, being

persecuted by the police, began to prepare for another change. After entertaining projects about Greece, America, and Switzerland — Trelawny undertaking to have the "Bolivar" conveyed over the Alps to the Lake of Geneva —he decided on following his friends to Genoa. He left in September with La Guiccioli, passed by Lerici and Sestri, and then for the ten remaining months of his Italian life took up his quarters at Albaro, about a mile to the east of the city, in the Villa Saluzzo, which Mrs. Shelley had procured for him and his party. She herself settled with the Hunts — who travelled about the same time, at Byron's expense, but in their own company—in the neighbouring Casa Negroto. Not far off, Mr. Savage Landor was in possession of the Casa Pallavicini, but there was little intercourse between the three. Landor and Byron, in many respects more akin than any other two Englishmen of their age, were always separated by an unhappy bar or intervening mist. The only family with whom the poet maintained any degree of intimacy was that of the Earl of Blessington, consisting of the Earl himself — a gouty old gentleman, with stories about him of the past— the Countess, and her sister, Miss Power, and the "cupidon déchaîné," the Anglo-French Count Alfred d'Orsay —who were to take part in stories of the future. In the spring of 1823, Byron persuaded them to occupy the Villa Paradiso, and was accustomed to accompany them frequently on horseback excursions along the coast to their favourite Nervi. It has been said that Lady Blessington's *Conversations with Lord Byron* are, as regards trustworthiness, on a par with Landor's *Imaginary Conversations*. Let this be so, they are still of interest on points of fact which it must have been easier to record than to imagine. However adorned, or the reverse, by the fancies

of a habitual novelist, they convey the impressions of a good-humoured, lively, and fascinating woman, derived from a more or less intimate association with the most brilliant man of the age. Of his personal appearance—a matter of which she was a good judge—we have the following: "One of Byron's eyes was larger than the other; his nose was rather thick, so he was best seen in profile; his mouth was splendid, and his scornful expression was real, not affected; but a sweet smile often broke through his melancholy. He was at this time very pale and thin (which indicates the success of his regimen of reduction since leaving Venice). His hair was dark brown, here and there turning grey. His voice was harmonious, clear, and low. There is some gaucherie in his walk, from his attempts to conceal his lameness. Ada's portrait is like him, and he is pleased at the likeness, but hoped she would not turn out to be clever—at any event not poetical. He is fond of gossip, and apt to speak slightingly of some of his friends, but is loyal to others. His great defect is flippancy, and a total want of self-possession." The narrator also dwells on his horror of interviewers, by whom at this time he was even more than usually beset. One visitor of the period ingenuously observes—"Certain persons will be chagrined to hear that Byron's mode of life does not furnish the smallest food for calumny." Another says, "I never saw a countenance more composed and still—I might even add, more sweet and prepossessing. But his temper was easily ruffled, and for a whole day; he could not endure the ringing of bells, bribed his neighbours to repress their noises, and failing, retaliated by surpassing them; he never forgave Colonel Carr for breaking one of his dog's ribs, though he generally forgave injuries without forgetting them. He

had a bad opinion of the inertness of the Genoese; for whatever he himself did he did with a will—'toto se corpore miscuit,' and was wont to assume a sort of dictatorial tone—as if 'I have said it, and it must be so,' were enough."

From these waifs and strays of gossip we return to a subject of deeper interest. The Countess of Blessington, with natural curiosity, was anxious to elicit from Byron some light on the mystery of his domestic affairs, and renewed the attempt previously made by Madame de Staël, to induce him to some movement towards a reconciliation with his wife. His reply to this overture was to show her a letter which he had written to Lady Byron from Pisa, but never forwarded, of the tone of which the following extracts must be a sufficient indication: "I have to acknowledge the receipt of Ada's hair. . . . I also thank you for the inscription of the date and name; and I will tell you why. I believe they are the only two or three words of your handwriting in my possession, for your letters I returned, and except the two words—or rather the one word 'household' written twice—in an old account-book, I have no other. Every day which keeps us asunder should, after so long a period, rather soften our mutual feelings, which must always have one rallying-point as long as our child exists. We both made a bitter mistake, but now it is over. I considered our reunion as not impossible for more than a year after the separation, but then I gave up the hope. I am violent, but not malignant; for only fresh provocations can awaken my resentment. Remember that if you have injured me in aught, this forgiveness is something, and that if I have injured you, it is something more still, if it be true, as moralists assert, that the most offending are the least forgiving."

"It is a strange business," says the Countess, about Lady Byron. "When he was praising her mental and personal qualifications, I asked him how all that he now said agreed with certain sarcasms supposed to be a reference to her in his works. He smiled, shook his head, and said, they were meant to spite and vex her, when he was wounded and irritated at her refusing to receive or answer his letters; that he was sorry he had written them, but might on similar provocations recur to the same vengeance." On another occasion he said, "Lady B.'s first idea is what is due to herself. I wish she thought a little more of what is due to others. My besetting sin is a want of that self-respect which she has in excess. When I have broken out, on slight provocation, into one of my ungovernable fits of rage, her calmness piqued and seemed to reproach me; it gave her an air of superiority that vexed and increased my *mauvaise humeur*." To Lady Blessington as to every one, he always spoke of Mrs. Leigh with the same unwavering admiration, love, and respect.

"My first impressions were melancholy—my poor mother gave them; but to my sister, who, incapable of wrong herself, suspected no wrong in others, I owe the little good of which I can boast; and had I earlier known her it might have influenced my destiny. Augusta was to me in the hour of need a tower of strength. Her affection was my last rallying-point, and is now the only bright spot that the horizon of England offers to my view. She has given me such good advice—and yet, finding me incapable of following it, loved and pitied me but the more because I was erring." Similarly, in the height of his spleen, writes Leigh Hunt—"I believe there did exist one person to whom he would have been generous, if she pleased: perhaps was so. At all events, he left her the bulk of his

property, and always spoke of her with the greatest esteem. This was his sister, Mrs. Leigh. He told me she used to call him 'Baby Byron.' It was easy to see that of the two persons she had by far the greater judgment."

Byron, having laid aside *Don Juan* for more than a year, in deference to La Guiccioli, was permitted to resume it again in July, 1822, on a promise to observe the proprieties. Cantos vi.–xi. were written at Pisa. Cantos xii.–xvi. at Genoa, in 1823. These latter portions of the poem were published by John Hunt. His other works of the period are of minor consequence. The *Age of Bronze* is a declamation, rather than a satire, directed against the Convention of Cintra and the Congress of Verona, especially Lord Londonderry's part in the latter, only remarkable, from its advice to the Greeks, to dread

> "The false friend worse than the infuriate foe;"

i. e., to prefer the claw of the Tartar savage to the paternal hug of the great Bear—

> "Better still toil for masters, than await,
> The slave of slaves, before a Russian gate."

In the *Island*—a tale of the mutiny of the "Bounty"—he reverts to the manner and theme of his old romances, finding a new scene in the Pacific for the exercise of his fancy. In this piece his love of nautical adventure reappears, and his idealization of primitive life, caught from Rousseau and Chateaubriand. There is more repose about this poem than in any of the author's other compositions. In its pages the sea seems to plash about rocks and caves that bask under a southern sun. "'Byron, the sorcerer,' he can do with me what he will," said old Dr. Parr, on reading it. As the swan-song of the poet's sentimental

verse, it has a pleasing if not pathetic calm. During the last years in Italy he planned an epic on the Conquest and a play on the subject of Hannibal, neither of which was executed.

In the criticism of a famous work there is often little left to do but to criticise the critics—to bring to a focus the most salient things that have been said about it, to eliminate the absurd from the sensible, the discriminating from the commonplace. *Don Juan*, more than any of its precursors, *is* Byron, and it has been similarly handled. The early cantos were ushered into the world amid a chorus of mingled applause and execration. The minor Reviews, representing middle-class respectability, were generally vituperative, and the higher authorities divided in their judgments. The *British Magazine* said that "his lordship had degraded his personal character by the composition;" the *London*, that the poem was "a satire on decency;" the *Edinburgh Monthly*, that it was "a melancholy spectacle;" the *Eclectic*, that it was "an outrage worthy of detestation." *Blackwood* declared that the author was "brutally outraging all the best feelings of humanity." Moore characterizes it as "the most painful display of the versatility of genius that has ever been left for succeeding ages to wonder at or deplore." Jeffrey found in the whole composition "a tendency to destroy all belief in the reality of virtue;" and Dr. John Watkins classically named it "the Odyssey of Immorality." "*Don Juan* will be read," wrote one critic, "as long as satire, wit, mirth, and supreme excellence shall be esteemed among men." "Stick to *Don Juan*," exhorted another; "it is the only sincere thing you have written, and it will live after all your *Harolds* have ceased to be 'a schoolgirl's tale, the wonder of an hour.' It is the best of all

your works—the most spirited, the most straightforward, the most interesting, the most poetical." "It is a work," said Goethe, "full of soul, bitterly savage in its misanthropy, exquisitely delicate in its tenderness." Shelley confessed, "It fulfils in a certain degree what I have long preached, the task of producing something wholly new and relative to the age, and yet surpassingly beautiful." And Sir Walter Scott, in the midst of a hearty panegyric, "It has the variety of Shakspeare himself. Neither *Childe Harold*, nor the most beautiful of Byron's earlier tales, contain more exquisite poetry than is to be found scattered through the cantos of *Don Juan*, amid verses which the author seems to have thrown from him with an effort as spontaneous as that of a tree resigning its leaves."

One noticeable feature about these comments is their sincerity: reviewing, however occasionally one-sided, had not then sunk to be the mere register of adverse or friendly cliques; and, with all his anxiety for its verdict, Byron never solicited the favour of any portion of the press. Another is the fact that the adverse critics missed their mark. They had not learnt to say of a book of which they disapproved, that it was weak or dull: in pronouncing it to be vicious, they helped to promote its sale; and the most decried has been the most widely read of the author's works. Many of the readers of *Don Juan* have, it must be confessed, been found among those least likely to admire in it what is most admirable—who have been attracted by the very excesses of buffoonery, violations of good taste, and occasionally almost vulgar slang, which disfigure its pages. Their patronage is, at the best, of no more value than that of a mob gathered by a showy Shakspearian revival, and it has laid the volume open to the charge of being adapted "laudari ab illaudatis." But the wel-

come of the work in other quarters is as indubitably due to higher qualities. In writing *Don Juan*, Byron attempted something that had never been done before, and his genius so chimed with his enterprise that it need never be done again. "Down," cries M. Chasles, "with the imitators who did their best to make his name ridiculous." In commenting on their failure, an excellent critic has explained the pre-established fitness of the ottava rima—the first six lines of which are a dance, and the concluding couplet a "breakdown"—for the mock-heroic. Byron's choice of this measure may have been suggested by Whistlecraft; but he had studied its cadence in Pulci, and the *Novelle Galanti* of Casti, to whom he is indebted for other features of his satire; and he added to what has been well termed its characteristic jauntiness, by his almost constant use of the double rhyme. That the ottava rima is out of place in consistently pathetic poetry, may be seen from its obvious misuse in Keats's *Pot of Basil*. Many writers, from Frere to Moultrie, have employed it successfully in burlesque or mere society verse; but Byron alone has employed it triumphantly, for he has made it the vehicle of thoughts grave as well as gay, of "black spirits and white, red spirits and grey," of sparkling fancy, bitter sarcasm, and tender memories. He has swept into the pages of his poem the experience of thirty years of a life so crowded with vitality that our sense of the plethora of power which it exhibits makes us ready to condone its lapses. Byron, it has been said, balances himself on a ladder like other acrobats; but alone, like the Japanese master of the art, he all the while bears on his shoulders the weight of a man. Much of *Don Juan* is as obnoxious to criticism in detail as his earlier work; it has every mark of being written in hot haste. In the midst of the

most serious passages (*e. g.*, the "Ave Maria") we are checked in our course by bathos or commonplace, and thrown where the writer did not mean to throw us; but the mocking spirit is so prevailingly present that we are often left in doubt as to his design, and what is in *Harold* an outrage is in this case only a flaw. His command over the verse itself is almost miraculous: he glides from extreme to extreme, from punning to pathos, from melancholy to mad merriment, sighing or laughing by the way at his readers or at himself or at the stanzas. Into them he can fling anything under the sun, from a doctor's prescription to a metaphysical theory.

> "When Bishop Berkeley said there was no matter,
> And proved it, 'twas no matter what he said,"

is as cogent a refutation of idealism as the cumbrous wit of Scotch logicians.

The popularity of the work is due not mainly to the verbal skill which makes it rank as the *cleverest* of English verse compositions, to its shoals of witticisms, its winged words, telling phrases, and incomparable transitions; but to the fact that it continues to address a large class who are not in the ordinary sense of the word lovers of poetry. *Don Juan* is emphatically the poem of intelligent men of middle age, who have grown weary of mere sentiment, and yet retain enough of sympathetic feeling to desire at times to recall it. Such minds, crusted like Plato's Glaucus with the world, are yet pervious to appeals to the spirit that survives beneath the dry dust amid which they move; but only at rare intervals can they accompany the pure lyrist "singing as if he would never be old," and they are apt to turn with some impatience even from *Romeo and Juliet* to *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. To them, on the other hand,

the hard wit of *Hudibras* is equally tiresome, and more distasteful; their chosen friend is the humourist who, inspired by a subtle perception of the contradictions of life, sees matter for smiles in sorrow, and tears in laughter. Byron was not, in the highest sense, a great humourist; he does not blend together the two phases, as they are blended in single sentences or whole chapters of Sterne, in the April sunshine of Richter, or in *Sartor Resartus;* but he comes near to produce the same effect by his unequalled power of alternating them. His wit is seldom hard, never dry, for it is moistened by the constant juxtaposition of sentiment. His tenderness is none the less genuine that he is perpetually jerking it away—an equally favourite fashion with Carlyle—as if he could not trust himself to be serious for fear of becoming sentimental; and, in recollection of his frequent exhibitions of unaffected hysteria, we accept his own confession—

> "If I laugh at any mortal thing,
> 'Tis that I may not weep"—

as a perfectly sincere comment on the most sincere, and therefore in many respects the most effective, of his works. He has, after his way, endeavoured in grave prose and light verse to defend it against its assailants, saying, "In *Don Juan* I take a vicious and unprincipled character, and lead him through those ranks of society whose accomplishments cover and cloak their vices, and paint the natural effects;" and elsewhere, that he means to make his scamp "end as a member of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, or by the guillotine, or in an unhappy marriage." It were easy to dilate on the fact that in interpreting the phrases of the satirist into the language of the moralist we often require to read them backwards: Byron's own

statement, "I hate a motive," is, however, more to the point:

> "But the fact is that I have nothing plann'd
> Unless it were to be a moment merry—
> A novel word in my vocabulary."

Don Juan can only be credited with a text in the sense in which every large experience, of its own accord, conveys its lesson. It was to the author a picture of the world as he saw it; and it is to us a mirror in which every attribute of his genius, every peculiarity of his nature, is reflected without distortion. After the audacious though brilliant opening, and the unfortunately pungent reference to the poet's domestic affairs, we find in the famous storm (c. ii.) a bewildering epitome of his prevailing manner. Home-sickness, sea-sickness, the terror of the tempest, "wailing, blasphemy, devotion," the crash of the wreck, the wild farewell, "the bubbling cry of some strong swimmer in his agony," the horrors of famine, the tale of the two fathers, the beautiful apparitions of the rainbow and the bird, the feast on Juan's spaniel, his reluctance to dine on "his pastor and his master," the consequences of eating Pedrillo —all follow each other like visions in the phantasmagoria of a nightmare, till at last the remnant of the crew are drowned by a ridiculous rhyme—

> "Finding no place for their landing better,
> They ran the boat ashore, and overset her."

Then comes the episode of Haidee, "a long low island song of ancient days," the character of the girl herself being like a thread of pure gold running through the fabric of its surroundings, motley in every page; *e. g.*, after the impassioned close of the "Isles of Greece," we have the stanza:—

"Thus sang, or would, or could, or should, have sung,
The modern Greek, in tolerable verse;
If not like Orpheus quite, when Greece was young,
Yet in those days he might have done much worse—"

with which the author dashes away the romance of the song, and then launches into a tirade against Bob Southey's epic and Wordsworth's pedlar poems. This vein exhausted, we come to the "Ave Maria," one of the most musical, and seemingly heartfelt, hymns in the language. The close of the ocean pastoral (in c. iv.) is the last of pathetic narrative in the book; but the same feeling that "mourns o'er the beauty of the Cyclades" often reemerges in shorter passages. The fifth and sixth cantos, in spite of the glittering sketch of Gulbeyaz, and the fawn-like image of Dudù, are open to the charge of diffuseness, and the character of Johnson is a failure. From the seventh to the tenth, the poem decidedly dips, partly because the writer had never been in Russia; then it again rises, and shows no sign of falling off to the end.

No part of the work has more suggestive interest or varied power than some of the later cantos, in which Juan is whirled through the vortex of the fashionable life which Byron knew so well, loved so much, and at last esteemed so little. There is no richer piece of descriptive writing in his works than that of Newstead (in c. xiii.); nor is there any analysis of female character so subtle as that of the Lady Adeline. Conjectures as to the originals of imaginary portraits are generally futile; but Miss Millpond —not Donna Inez—is obviously Lady Byron; in Adeline we may suspect that at Genoa he was drawing from the life in the Villa Paradiso; while Aurora Raby seems to be an idealization of La Guiccioli:—

"Early in years, and yet more infantine
In figure, she had something of sublime
In eyes, which sadly shone, as seraphs shine:
All youth—but with an aspect beyond time;
Radiant and grave—as pitying man's decline;
Mournful—but mournful of another's crime,
She look'd as if she sat by Eden's door,
And grieved for those who could return no more.

"She was a Catholic, too, sincere, austere,
As far as her own gentle heart allow'd,
And deem'd that fallen worship far more dear,
Perhaps, because 'twas fallen: her sires were proud
Of deeds and days, when they had fill'd the ear
Of nations, and had never bent or bow'd
To novel power; and, as she was the last,
She held her old faith and old feelings fast.

"She gazed upon a world she scarcely knew,
As seeking not to know it; silent, lone,
As grows a flower, thus quietly she grew,
And kept her heart serene within its zone."

Constantly, towards the close of the work, there is an echo of home and country, a half involuntary cry after

"The love of higher things and better days;
Th' unbounded hope, and heavenly ignorance
Of what is call'd the world and the world's ways."

In the concluding stanza of the last completed canto, beginning—

"Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
'Twixt night and morn, on the horizon's verge"—

we have a condensation of the refrain of the poet's philosophy; but the main drift of the later books is a satire on London society. There are elements in a great city

which may be wrought into something nobler than satire, for all the energies of the age are concentrated where passion is fiercest and thought intensest, amid the myriad sights and sounds of its glare and gloom. But those scenes, and the actors in them, are apt also to induce the frame of mind in which a prose satirist describes himself as reclining under an arcade of the Pantheon: "Not the Pantheon by the Piazza Navona, where the immortal gods were worshipped—the immortal gods now dead; but the Pantheon in Oxford Street. Have not Selwyn, and Walpole, and March, and Carlisle figured there? Has not Prince Florizel flounced through the hall in his rustling domino, and danced there in powdered splendour? O my companions, I have drunk many a bout with you, and always found 'Vanitas Vanitatum' written on the bottom of the pot." This is the mind in which *Don Juan* interprets the universe, and paints the still living court of Florizel and his buffoons. A "nondescript and ever varying rhyme"—"a versified aurora borealis," half cynical, half Epicurean, it takes a partial, though a subtle view of that microcosm on stilts called the great world. It complains that in the days of old "men made the manners—manners now make men." It concludes—

> "Good company's a chess-board; there are kings,
> Queens, bishops, knights, rooks, pawns; the world's a game."

It passes from a reflection on "the dreary *fuimus* of all things here" to the advice—

> "But 'carpe diem,' Juan, 'carpe, carpe!'
> To-morrow sees another race as gay
> And transient, and devour'd by the same harpy.
> 'Life's a poor player,'—then play out the play."

It was the natural conclusion of the foregone stage of Byron's career. Years had given him power, but they were years in which his energies were largely wasted. Self-indulgence had not petrified his feeling, but it had thrown wormwood into its springs. He had learnt to look on existence as a walking shadow, and was strong only with the strength of a sincere despair.

> "Through life's road, so dim and dirty,
> I have dragg'd to three and thirty.
> What have those years left to me?
> Nothing, except thirty-three."

These lines are the summary of one who had drained the draught of pleasure to the dregs of bitterness.

CHAPTER X.

[1821–1824.]

POLITICS.—THE CARBONARI.—EXPEDITION TO GREECE.—DEATH.

In leaving Venice for Ravenna, Byron passed from the society of gondoliers and successive sultanas to a comparatively domestic life, with a mistress who at least endeavoured to stimulate some of his higher aspirations, and smiled upon his wearing the sword along with the lyre. In the last episode of his constantly chequered and too voluptuous career, we have the waking of Sardanapalus realized in the transmutation of the fantastical Harold into a practical strategist, financier, and soldier. No one ever lived who in the same space more thoroughly ran the gauntlet of existence. Having exhausted all other sources of vitality and intoxication—travel, gallantry, and verse—it remained for the despairing poet to become a hero. But he was also moved by a public passion, the genuineness of which there is no reasonable ground to doubt. Like Alfieri and Rousseau, he had taken for his motto, "I am of the opposition;" and, as Dante under a republic called for a monarchy, Byron, under monarchies at home and abroad, called for a commonwealth. Amid the inconsistencies of his political sentiment, he had been consistent in so much love of liberty as led him to de-

nounce oppression, even when he had no great faith in the oppressed—whether English, or Italians, or Greeks.

Byron regarded the established dynasties of the continent with a sincere hatred. He talks of the "more than infernal tyranny" of the House of Austria. To his fancy, as to Shelley's, New England is the star of the future. Attracted by a strength or rather force of character akin to his own, he worshipped Napoleon, even when driven to confess that "the hero had sunk into a king." He lamented his overthrow; but, above all, that he was beaten by "three stupid, legitimate old dynasty boobies of regular sovereigns." "I write in ipecacuanha that the Bourbons are restored." "What right have we to prescribe laws to France? Here we are retrograding to the dull, stupid old system, balance of Europe—poising straws on kings' noses, instead of wringing them off." "The king-times are fast finishing. There will be blood shed like water, and tears like mist; but the peoples will conquer in the end. I shall not live to see it, but I foresee it." "Give me a republic. Look in the history of the earth—Rome, Greece, Venice, Holland, France, America, our too short Commonwealth—and compare it with what they did under masters."

His serious political verses are all in the strain of the lines on Wellington—

> "Never had mortal man such opportunity—
> Except Napoleon—or abused it more;
> You might have freed fallen Europe from the unity
> Of tyrants, and been blessed from shore to shore."

An enthusiasm for Italy, which survived many disappointments, dictated some of the most impressive passages of his *Harold*, and inspired the *Lament of Tasso* and the

Ode on Venice. The *Prophecy of Dante* contains much that has since proved prophetic—

> "What is there wanting, then, to set thee free,
> And show thy beauty in its fullest light?
> To make the Alps impassable; and we,
> Her sons, may do this with one deed—*Unite!*"

His letters reiterate the same idea, in language even more emphatic. "It is no great matter, supposing that Italy could be liberated, who or what is sacrificed. It is a grand object—the very poetry of politics: only think—a free Italy!" Byron acted on his assertion that a man ought to do more for society than write verses. Mistrusting its leaders, and detesting the wretched lazzaroni, who "would have betrayed themselves and all the world," he yet threw himself heart and soul into the insurrection of 1820, saying, "Whatever I can do by money, means, or person, I will venture freely for their freedom." He joined the secret society of the Carbonari, wrote an address to the Liberal government set up in Naples, supplied arms and a refuge in his house, which he was prepared to convert into a fortress. In February, 1821, on the rout of the Neapolitans by the Austrians, the conspiracy was crushed. Byron, who "had always an idea that it would be bungled," expressed his fear that the country would be thrown back for 500 years into barbarism, and the Countess Guiccioli confessed with tears that the Italians must return to composing and strumming operatic airs. Carbonarism having collapsed, it of course made way for a reaction; but the encouragement and countenance of the English poet and peer helped to keep alive the smouldering fire that Mazzini fanned into a flame, till Cavour turned it to a practical purpose, and the dreams of the idealists of 1820 were finally realized.

On the failure of the luckless conspiracy, Byron naturally betook himself to history, speculation, satire, and ideas of a journalistic propaganda; but all through his mind was turning to the renewal of the action which was his destiny. "If I live ten years longer," he writes in 1822, "you will see that it is not all over with me. I don't mean in literature, for that is nothing—and I do not think it was my vocation; but I shall do something." The Greek war of liberation opened a new field for the exercise of his indomitable energy. This romantic struggle, begun in April, 1821, was carried on for two years with such remarkable success, that at the close of 1822 Greece was beginning to be recognized as an independent state: but in the following months the tide seemed to turn; dissensions broke out among the leaders, the spirit of intrigue seemed to stifle patriotism, and the energies of the insurgents were hampered for want of the sinews of war. There was a danger of the movement being starved out, and the committee of London sympathizers—of which the poet's intimate friend and frequent correspondent, Mr. Douglas Kinnaird, and Captain Blaquière, were leading promoters—was impressed with the necessity of procuring funds in support of the cause. With a view to this it seemed of consequence to attach to it some shining name, and men's thoughts almost inevitably turned to Byron. No other Englishman seemed so fit to be associated with the enterprise as the warlike poet, who had twelve years before linked his fame to that of "grey Marathon" and "Athena's tower," and, more recently, immortalized the isles on which he cast so many a longing glance. Hobhouse broke the subject to him early in the spring of 1823: the committee opened communications in April. After hesitating through May, in June Byron con-

sented to meet Blaquière at Zante, and, on hearing the results of the captain's expedition to the Morea, to decide on future steps. His share in this enterprise has been assigned to purely personal and comparatively mean motives. He was, it is said, disgusted with his periodical, sick of his editor, tired of his mistress, and bent on any change, from China to Peru, that would give him a new theatre for display. One grows weary of the perpetual half-truths of inveterate detraction. It is granted that Byron was restless, vain, imperious, never did anything without a desire to shine in the doing of it, and was to a great degree the slave of circumstances. Had the *Liberal* proved a lamp to the nations, instead of a mere "red flag flaunted in the face of John Bull," he might have cast anchor at Genoa; but the whole drift of his work and life demonstrates that he was capable on occasion of merging himself in what he conceived to be great causes, especially in their evil days. Of the Hunts he may have had enough; but the invidious statement about La Guiccioli has no foundation, other than a somewhat random remark of Shelley, and the fact that he left her nothing in his will. It is distinctly ascertained that she expressly prohibited him from doing so; they continued to correspond to the last, and her affectionate, though unreadable, reminiscences are sufficient proof that she at no time considered herself to be neglected, injured, or aggrieved.

Byron, indeed, left Italy in an unsettled state of mind: he spoke of returning in a few months, and as the period for his departure approached, became more and more irresolute. A presentiment of his death seemed to brood over a mind always superstitious, though never fanatical. Shortly before his own departure, the Blessingtons were preparing to leave Genoa for England. On the evening

of his farewell call he began to speak of his voyage with despondency, saying, "Here we are all now together; but when and where shall we meet again? I have a sort of boding that we see each other for the last time, as something tells me I shall never again return from Greece:" after which remark he leant his head on the sofa, and burst into one of his hysterical fits of tears. The next week was given to preparations for an expedition, which, entered on with mingled motives—sentimental, personal, public—became more real and earnest to Byron at every step he took. He knew all the vices of the "hereditary bondsmen" among whom he was going, and went among them with yet unquenched aspirations, but with the bridle of discipline in his hand, resolved to pave the way towards the nation becoming better, by devoting himself to making it free.

On the morning of July 14 (1823) he embarked in the brig "Hercules," with Trelawny; Count Pietro Gamba, who remained with him to the last; Bruno, a young Italian doctor; Scott, the captain of the vessel, and eight servants, including Fletcher; besides the crew. They had on board two guns, with other arms and ammunition, five horses, an ample supply of medicines, with 50,000 Spanish dollars in coin and bills. The start was inauspicious. A violent squall drove them back to port, and in the course of a last ride with Gamba to Albaro, Byron asked, "Where shall we be in a year?" On the same day of the same month of 1824 he was carried to the tomb of his ancestors. They again set sail on the following evening, and in five days reached Leghorn, where the poet received a salutation in verse, addressed to him by Goethe, and replied to it. Here Mr. Hamilton Brown, a Scotch gentleman with considerable knowledge of Greek affairs, joined the party,

and induced them to change their course to Cephalonia, for the purpose of obtaining the advice and assistance of the English resident, Colonel Napier. The poet occupied himself during the voyage mainly in reading—among other books, Scott's *Life of Swift*, Grimm's *Correspondence*, La Rochefoucauld, and Las Casas—and watching the classic or historic shores which they skirted, especially noting Elba, Soracte, the Straits of Messina, and Etna. In passing Stromboli he said to Trelawny, "You will see this scene in a fifth canto of *Childe Harold*." On his companions suggesting that he should write some verses on the spot, he tried to do so, but threw them away, with the remark, "I cannot write poetry at will, as you smoke tobacco." Trelawny confesses that he was never on shipboard with a better companion, and that a severer test of good-fellowship it is impossible to apply. Together they shot at gulls or empty bottles, and swam every morning in the sea. Early in August they reached their destination. Coming in sight of the Morea, the poet said to Trelawny, "I feel as if the eleven long years of bitterness I have passed through since I was here were taken from my shoulders, and I was scudding through the Greek Archipelago with old Bathurst in his frigate." Byron remained at or about Cephalonia till the close of the year. Not long after his arrival he made an excursion to Ithaca, and, visiting the monastery at Vathi, was received by the abbot with great ceremony, which, in a fit of irritation, brought on by a tiresome ride on a mule, he returned with unusual discourtesy; but next morning, on his giving a donation to their alms-box, he was dismissed with the blessing of the monks. "If this isle were mine," he declared on his way back, "I would break my staff and bury my book." A little later, Brown and Trelawny being sent off with letters

to the provisional government, the former returned with some Greek emissaries to London to negotiate a loan; the latter attached himself to Odysseus, the chief of the republican party at Athens, and never again saw Byron alive. The poet, after spending a month on board the "Hercules," dismissed the vessel, and hired a house for Gamba and himself at Metaxata, a healthy village about four miles from the capital of the island. Meanwhile, Blaquière, neglecting his appointment at Zante, had gone to Corfu, and thence to England. Colonel Napier being absent from Cephalonia, Byron had some pleasant social intercourse with his deputy, but, unable to get from him any authoritative information, was left without advice, to be besieged by letters and messages from the factions. Among these there were brought to him hints that the Greeks wanted a king, and he is reported to have said, "If they make me the offer, I will perhaps not reject it."

The position would doubtless have been acceptable to a man who never—amid his many self-deceptions—affected to deny that he was ambitious; and who can say what might not have resulted for Greece, had the poet lived to add lustre to her crown? In the meantime, while faring more frugally than a day-labourer, he yet surrounded himself with a show of royal state, had his servants armed with gilt helmets, and gathered around him a body-guard of Suliotes. These wild mercenaries becoming turbulent, he was obliged to despatch them to Mesolonghi, then threatened with siege by the Turks and anxiously waiting relief. During his residence at Cephalonia, Byron was gratified by the interest evinced in him by the English residents. Among these the physician, Dr. Kennedy, a worthy Scotchman, who imagined himself to be a theologian with a genius for conversion, was conducting a series

of religious meetings at Argostoli, when the poet expressed a wish to be present at one of them. After listening, it is said, to a set of discourses that occupied the greater part of twelve hours, he seems, for one reason or another, to have felt called on to enter the lists, and found himself involved in the series of controversial dialogues afterwards published in a substantial book. This volume, interesting in several respects, is one of the most charming examples of unconscious irony in the language, and it is matter of regret that our space does not admit of the abridgment of several of its pages. They bear testimony, on the one hand, to Byron's capability of patience, and frequent sweetness of temper under trial; on the other, to Kennedy's utter want of humour, and to his courageous honesty. The curiously confronted interlocutors, in the course of the missionary and subsequent private meetings, ran over most of the ground debated between opponents and apologists of the Calvinistic faith, which Kennedy upheld without stint. The *Conversations* add little to what we already know of Byron's religious opinions; nor is it easy to say where he ceases to be serious and begins to banter, or vice versâ. He evidently wished to show that in argument he was good at fence, and could handle a theologian as skilfully as a foil. At the same time he wished, if possible, though, as appears, in vain, to get some light on a subject with regard to which in his graver moods he was often exercised. On some points he is explicit. He makes an unequivocal protest against the doctrines of eternal punishment and infant damnation, saying that if the rest of mankind were to be damned, he "would rather keep them company than creep into heaven alone." On questions of inspiration, and the deeper problems of human life, he is less distinct, being naturally inclined to a speculative ne-

cessitarianism, and disposed to admit original depravity; but he did not see his way out of the maze through the Atonement, and held that prayer had only significance as a devotional affection of the heart. Byron showed a remarkable familiarity with the Scriptures, and with parts of Barrow, Chillingworth, and Stillingfleet; but on Kennedy's lending, for his edification, Boston's *Fourfold State*, he returned it with the remark that it was too deep for him. On another occasion he said, "Do you know I am nearly reconciled to St. Paul, for he says there is no difference between the Jews and the Greeks? and I am exactly of the same opinion, for the character of both is equally vile." The good Scotchman's religious self-confidence is throughout free from intellectual pride; and his own confession, "This time I suspect his lordship had the best of it," might perhaps be applied to the whole discussion.

Critics who have little history and less war have been accustomed to attribute Byron's lingering at Cephalonia to indolence and indecision; they write as if he ought, on landing on Greek soil, to have put himself at the head of an army and stormed Constantinople. Those who know more confess that the delay was deliberate, and that it was judicious. The Hellenic uprising was animated by the spirit of a "lion after slumber," but it had the heads of a Hydra hissing and tearing at one another. The chiefs who defended the country by their arms compromised her by their arguments, and some of her best fighters were little better than pirates and bandits. Greece was a prey to factions—republican, monarchic, aristocratic—representing naval, military, and territorial interests, and each beset by the adventurers who flock round every movement, only representing their own. During the first two years of success they were held in embryo; during the later years

of disaster, terminated by the allies at Navarino, they were buried; during the interlude of Byron's residence, when the foes were like hounds in the leash, waiting for a renewal of the struggle, they were rampant. Had he joined any one of them he would have degraded himself to the level of a mere condottiere, and helped to betray the common cause. Beset by solicitations to go to Athens, to the Morea, to Acarnania, he resolutely held apart, biding his time, collecting information, making himself known as a man of affairs, endeavouring to conciliate rival claimants for pension or place, and carefully watching the tide of war. Numerous anecdotes of the period relate to acts of public or private benevolence, which endeared him to the population of the island; but he was on the alert against being fleeced or robbed. "The bulk of the English," writes Colonel Napier, "came expecting to find the Peloponnesus filled with Plutarch's men, and returned thinking the inhabitants of Newgate more moral. Lord Byron judged the Greeks fairly, and knew that allowance must be made for emancipated slaves." Among other incidents we hear of his passing a group, who were "shrieking and howling as in Ireland" over some men buried in the fall of a bank; he snatched a spade, began to dig, and threatened to horsewhip the peasants unless they followed his example. On November 30 he despatched to the central government a remarkable state paper, in which he dwells on the fatal calamity of a civil war, and says that, unless union and order are established, all hopes of a loan —which, being every day more urgent, he was in letters to England constantly pressing—are at an end. "I desire," he concluded, "the wellbeing of Greece, and nothing else. I will do all I can to secure it; but I will never consent that the English public be deceived as to the real state of

affairs. You have fought gloriously; act honourably towards your fellow-citizens and the world, and it will then no more be said, as has been repeated for two thousand years, with the Roman historians, that Philopœmen was the last of the Grecians."

Prince Alexander Mavrocordatos—the most prominent of the practical patriotic leaders—having been deposed from the presidency, was sent to regulate the affairs of Western Greece, and was now on his way with a fleet to relieve Mesolonghi, in attempting which the brave Marco Bozzaris had previously fallen. In a letter, opening communication with a man for whom he always entertained a high esteem, Byron writes, "Colonel Stanhope has arrived from London, charged by our committee to act in concert with me. . . . Greece is at present placed between three measures—either to reconquer her liberty, to become a dependence of the sovereigns of Europe, or to return to a Turkish province. She has the choice only of these three alternatives. Civil war is but a road that leads to the two latter."

At length the long-looked-for fleet arrived, and the Turkish squadron, with the loss of a treasure-ship, retired up the Gulf of Lepanto. Mavrocordatos, on entering Mesolonghi, lost no time in inviting the poet to join him, and placed a brig at his disposal, adding, "I need not tell you to what a pitch your presence is desired by everybody, or what a prosperous direction it will give to all our affairs. Your counsels will be listened to like oracles."

At the same date Stanhope writes, "The people in the streets are looking forward to his lordship's arrival as they would to the coming of the Messiah." Byron was unable to start in the ship sent for him; but in spite of medical warnings, a few days later, *i. e.*, December 28, he embark-

ed in a small fast-sailing sloop called a mistico, while the servants and baggage were stowed in another and larger vessel under the charge of Count Gamba. From Gamba's graphic account of the voyage we may take the following: "We sailed together till after ten at night; the wind favourable, a clear sky, the air fresh, but not sharp. Our sailors sang alternately patriotic songs, monotonous indeed, but to persons in our situation extremely touching, and we took part in them. We were all, but Lord Byron particularly, in excellent spirits. The mistico sailed the fastest. When the waves divided us, and our voices could no longer reach each other, we made signals by firing pistols and carbines. To-morrow we meet at Mesolonghi—to-morrow. Thus, full of confidence and spirits, we sailed along. At twelve we were out of sight of each other."

Byron's vessel, separated from her consort, came into the close proximity of a Turkish frigate, and had to take refuge among the Scrofes' rocks. Emerging thence, he attained a small seaport of Acarnania, called Dragomestri, whence sallying forth on the 2nd of January under the convoy of some Greek gunboats, he was nearly wrecked. On the 4th Byron made, when violently heated, an imprudent plunge in the sea, and was never afterwards free from a pain in his bones. On the 5th he arrived at Mesolonghi, and was received with salvoes of musketry and music. Gamba was waiting him. His vessel, the "Bombarda," had been taken by the Ottoman frigate, but the captain of the latter, recognizing the Count as having formerly saved his life in the Black Sea, made interest in his behalf with Yussuf Pasha at Patras, and obtained his discharge. In recompense, the poet subsequently sent to the Pasha some Turkish prisoners, with a letter requesting him to endeavour to mitigate the inhumanities of the war. Byron

brought to the Greeks at Mesolonghi the 4000*l.* of his personal loan (applied, in the first place, to defraying the expenses of the fleet), with the spell of his name and presence. He was shortly afterwards appointed to the command of the intended expedition against Lepanto, and, with this view, again took into his pay five hundred Suliotes. An approaching general assembly to organize the forces of the West had brought together a motley crew, destitute, discontented, and more likely to wage war upon each other than on their enemies. Byron's closest associates during the ensuing months were the engineer Parry, an energetic artilleryman, "extremely active, and of strong practical talents," who had travelled in America, and Colonel Stanhope (afterwards Lord Harrington), equally with himself devoted to the emancipation of Greece, but at variance about the means of achieving it. Stanhope, a moral enthusiast of the stamp of Kennedy, beset by the fallacy of religious missions, wished to cover the Morea with Wesleyan tracts, and liberate the country by the agency of the press. He had imported a converted blacksmith, with a cargo of Bibles, types, and paper, who on 20*l.* a year undertook to accomplish the reform. Byron, backed by the good sense of Mavrocordatos, proposed to make cartridges of the tracts, and small shot of the type; he did not think that the turbulent tribes were ripe for freedom of the press, and had begun to regard Republicanism itself as a matter of secondary moment. The disputant allies in the common cause occupied each a flat of the same small house; the soldier by profession was bent on writing the Turks down, the poet on fighting them down, holding that "the work of the sword must precede that of the pen, and that camps must be the training-schools of freedom." Their altercations were sometimes fierce—

"Despot!" cried Stanhope, "after professing liberal principles from boyhood, you, when called to act, prove yourself a Turk." "Radical!" retorted Byron, "if I had held up my finger I could have crushed your press"—but this did not prevent the recognition by each of them of the excellent qualities of the other.

Ultimately Stanhope went to Athens, and allied himself with Trelawny and Odysseus and the party of the Left. Nothing can be more statesmanlike than some of Byron's papers of this and the immediately preceding period, nothing more admirable than the spirit which inspires them. He had come into the heart of a revolution, exposed to the same perils as those which had wrecked the similar movement in Italy. Neither trusting too much nor distrusting too much, with a clear head and a good will he set about enforcing a series of excellent measures. From first to last he was engaged in denouncing dissension, in advocating unity, in doing everything that man could do to concentrate and utilize the disorderly elements with which he had to work. He occupied himself in repairing fortifications, managing ships, restraining licence, promoting courtesy between the foes, and regulating the disposal of the sinews of war.

On the morning of the 22nd of January, his last birthday, he came from his room to Stanhope's, and said, smiling, "You were complaining that I never write any poetry now," and read the familiar stanzas beginning—

> "'Tis time this heart should be unmoved,"

and ending—

> "Seek out—less often sought than found—
> A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
> Then look around, and choose thy ground,
> And take thy rest."

High thoughts, high resolves; but the brain that was overtasked, and the frame that was outworn, would be tasked and worn little longer. The lamp of a life that had burnt too fiercely was flickering to its close. "If we are not taken off with the sword," he writes on February 5, "we are like to march off with an ague in this mud basket; and, to conclude with a very bad pun, better *martially* than *marsh-ally*. The dykes of Holland when broken down are the deserts of Arabia, in comparison with Mesolonghi." In April, when it was too late, Stanhope wrote from Salona, in Phocis, imploring him not to sacrifice health, and perhaps life, "in that bog."

Byron's house stood in the midst of the exhalations of a muddy creek, and his natural irritability was increased by a more than usually long ascetic regimen. From the day of his arrival in Greece he discarded animal food, and lived mainly on toast, vegetables, and cheese, olives and light wine, at the rate of forty paras a day. In spite of his strength of purpose, his temper was not always proof against the rapacity and turbulence by which he was surrounded. About the middle of February, when the artillery had been got into readiness for the attack on Lepanto — the northern, as Patras was the southern, gate of the gulf, still in the hands of the Turks—the expedition was thrown back by an unexpected rising of the Suliotes. These peculiarly froward Greeks, chronically seditious by nature, were on this occasion, as afterwards appeared, stirred up by emissaries of Colocatroni, who, though assuming the position of the rival of Mavrocordatos, was simply a brigand on a large scale in the Morea. Exasperation at this mutiny, and the vexation of having to abandon a cherished scheme, seem to have been the immediately provoking causes of a violent convulsive fit which,

on the evening of the 15th, attacked the poet, and endangered his life. Next day he was better, but complained of weight in the head; and the doctors applying leeches too close to the temporal artery, he was bled till he fainted. And now occurred the last of those striking incidents so frequent in his life, in reference to which we may quote the joint testimony of two witnesses. Colonel Stanhope writes, "Soon after his dreadful paroxysm, when he was lying on his sick-bed, with his whole nervous system completely shaken, the mutinous Suliotes, covered with dirt and splendid attires, broke into his apartment, brandishing their costly arms and loudly demanding their rights. Lord Byron, electrified by this unexpected act, seemed to recover from his sickness; and the more the Suliotes raged the more his calm courage triumphed. The scene was truly sublime." "It is impossible," says Count Gamba, "to do justice to the coolness and magnanimity which he displayed upon every trying occasion. Upon trifling occasions he was certainly irritable; but the aspect of danger calmed him in an instant, and restored him the free exercise of all the powers of his noble nature. A more undaunted man in the hour of peril never breathed." A few days later, the riot being renewed, the disorderly crew were, on payment of their arrears, finally dismissed; but several of the English artificers under Parry left about the same time, in fear of their lives.

On the 4th, the last of the long list of Byron's letters to Moore resents, with some bitterness, the hasty acceptance of a rumour that he had been quietly writing *Don Juan* in some Ionian island. At the same date he writes to Kennedy, "I am not unaware of the precarious state of my health. But it is proper I should remain in Greece, and it were better to die doing something than nothing."

Visions of enlisting Europe and America on behalf of the establishment of a new state, that might in course of time develope itself over the realm of Alexander, floated and gleamed in his fancy; but in his practical daily procedure the poet took as his text the motto "festina lente," insisted on solid ground under his feet, and had no notion of sailing balloons over the sea. With this view he discouraged Stanhope's philanthropic and propagandist paper, the *Telegrapho*, and disparaged Dr. Mayer, its Swiss editor, saying, "Of all petty tyrants he is one of the pettiest, as are most demagogues." Byron had none of the Sclavonic leanings, and almost personal hatred of Ottoman rule, of some of our statesmen; but he saw on what side lay the forces and the hopes of the future. "I cannot calculate," he said to Gamba, during one of their latest rides together, "to what a height Greece may rise. Hitherto it has been a subject for the hymns and elegies of fanatics and enthusiasts; but now it will draw the attention of the politician. . . . At present there is little difference, in many respects, between Greeks and Turks, nor could there be; but the latter must, in the common course of events, decline in power; and the former must as inevitably become better. . . . The English Government deceived itself at first in thinking it possible to maintain the Turkish Empire in its integrity; but it cannot be done—that unwieldy mass is already putrified, and must dissolve. If anything like an equilibrium is to be upheld, Greece must be supported." These words have been well characterized as prophetic. During this time Byron rallied in health, and displayed much of his old spirit, vivacity, and humour, took part in such of his favourite amusements as circumstances admitted, fencing, shooting, riding, and playing with his pet dog Lion. The last of

his recorded practical jokes is his rolling about cannon-balls, and shaking the rafters, to frighten Parry in the room below with the dread of an earthquake.

Towards the close of the month, after being solicited to accompany Mavrocordatos to share the governorship of the Morea, he made an appointment to meet Colonel Stanhope and Odysseus at Salona, but was prevented from keeping it by violent floods which blocked up the communication. On the 30th he was presented with the freedom of the city of Mesolonghi. On the 3rd of April he intervened to prevent an Italian private, guilty of theft, from being flogged by order of some German officers. On the 9th, exhilarated by a letter from Mrs. Leigh with good accounts of her own and Ada's health, he took a long ride with Gamba and a few of the remaining Suliotes, and after being violently heated, and then drenched in a heavy shower, persisted in returning home in a boat, remarking with a laugh, in answer to a remonstrance, "I should make a pretty soldier if I were to care for such a trifle." It soon became apparent that he had caught his death. Almost immediately on his return he was seized with shiverings and violent pain. The next day he rose as usual, and had his last ride in the olive woods. On the 11th a rheumatic fever set in. On the 14th, Bruno's skill being exhausted, it was proposed to call Dr. Thomas from Zante, but a hurricane prevented any ship being sent. On the 15th, another physician, Mr. Milligen, suggested bleeding to allay the fever, but Byron held out against it, quoting Dr. Reid to the effect that "less slaughter is effected by the lance than the lancet—that minute instrument of mighty mischief;" and saying to Bruno, "If my hour is come I shall die, whether I lose my blood or keep it." Next morning Milligen induced him to

yield, by a suggestion of the possible loss of his reason. Throwing out his arm, he cried, "There! you are, I see, a d—d set of butchers. Take away as much blood as you like, and have done with it." The remedy, repeated on the following day with blistering, was either too late or ill-advised. On the 18th he saw more doctors, but was manifestly sinking, amid the tears and lamentations of attendants who could not understand each other's language. In his last hours his delirium bore him to the field of arms. He fancied he was leading the attack on Lepanto, and was heard exclaiming, "Forwards! forwards! follow me!" Who is not reminded of another death-bed, not remote in time from his, and the *Tête d'armée* of the great Emperor who with the great Poet divided the wonder of Europe? The stormy vision passed, and his thoughts reverted home. "Go to my sister," he faltered out to Fletcher; "tell her — go to Lady Byron — you will see her, and say"—nothing more could be heard but broken ejaculations: "Augusta—Ada—my sister, my child. Io lascio qualche cosa di caro nel mondo. For the rest, I am content to die." At six on the evening of the 18th he uttered his last words, "Δεῖ με νῦν καθεύδειν;" and on the 19th he passed away.

Never, perhaps, was there such a national lamentation. By order of Mavrocordatos, thirty-seven guns — one for each year of the poet's life—were fired from the battery, and answered by the Turks from Patras with an exultant volley. All offices, tribunals, and shops were shut, and a general mourning for twenty-one days proclaimed. Stanhope wrote, on hearing the news, "England has lost her brightest genius — Greece her noblest friend;" and Trelawny, on coming to Mesolonghi, heard nothing in the streets but "Byron is dead!" like a bell tolling through

the silence and the gloom. Intending contributors to the cause of Greece turned back when they heard the tidings, that seemed to them to mean she was headless. Her cities contended for the body, as of old for the birth of a poet. Athens wished him to rest in the Temple of Theseus. The funeral service was performed at Mesolonghi. But on the 2nd of May the embalmed remains left Zante, and on the 29th arrived in the Downs. His relatives applied for permission to have them interred in Westminster Abbey, but it was refused; and on the 16th July they were conveyed to the village church of Hucknall.

CHAPTER XI.

CHARACTERISTICS, AND PLACE IN LITERATURE.

Lord Jeffrey at the close of a once-famous review quaintly laments: "The tuneful quartos of Southey are already little better than lumber, and the rich melodies of Keats and Shelley, and the fantastical emphasis of Wordsworth, and the plebeian pathos of Crabbe, are melting fast from the field of our vision. The novels of Scott have put out his poetry, and the blazing star of Byron himself is receding from its place of pride." Of the poets of the early part of this century Lord John Russell thought Byron the greatest; then Scott; then Moore. "Such an opinion," wrote a *National* reviewer, in 1860, "is not worth a refutation; we only smile at it." Nothing in the history of literature is more curious than the shifting of the standard of excellence, which so perplexes criticism. But the most remarkable feature of the matter is the frequent return to power of the once discarded potentates. Byron is resuming his place: his spirit has come again to our atmosphere; and every budding critic, as in 1820, feels called on to pronounce a verdict on his genius and character. The present times are, in many respects, an aftermath of the first quarter of the century which was an era of revolt, of doubt, of storm. There succeeded an era of exhaustion, of quiescence, of reflection. The first years of the third quarter saw a revival of turbu-

lence and agitation; and, more than our fathers, we are inclined to sympathize with our grandfathers. Macaulay has popularized the story of the change of literary dynasty which in our island marked the close of the last, and the first two decades of the present, hundred years.

The corresponding artistic revolt on the continent was closely connected with changes in the political world. The originators of the romantic literature in Italy, for the most part, died in Spielberg or in exile. The same revolution which levelled the Bastille, and converted Versailles and the Trianon—the classic school in stone and terrace—into a moral Herculaneum and Pompeii, drove the models of the so-called Augustan ages into a museum of antiquarians. In our own country, the movement initiated by Chatterton, Cowper, and Burns was carried out by two classes of great writers. They agreed in opposing freedom to formality; in substituting for the old new aims and methods; in preferring a grain of mother wit to a peck of clerisy. They broke with the old school, as Protestantism broke with the old Church; but, like the sects, they separated again. Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, while refusing to acknowledge the literary precedents of the past, submitted themselves to a self-imposed law. The partialities of their maturity were towards things settled and regulated; their favourite virtues, endurance and humility; their conformity to established institutions was the basis of a new Conservatism. The others were the Radicals of the movement: they practically acknowledged no law but their own inspiration. Dissatisfied with the existing order, their sympathies were with strong will and passion and defiant independence. These found their master-types in Shelley and in Byron.

A reaction is always an extreme. Lollards, Puritans,

Covenanters were in some respects nauseous antidotes to ecclesiastical corruption. The ruins of the Scotch cathedrals and of the French nobility are warnings at once against the excess that provokes and the excess that avenges. The revolt against the *ancien régime* in letters made possible the Ode that is the high-tide mark of modern English inspiration, but it was parodied in page on page of maundering rusticity. Byron saw the danger, but was borne headlong by the rapids. Hence the anomalous contrast between his theories and his performance. Both Wordsworth and Byron were bitten by Rousseau; but the former is, at furthest, a Girondin. The latter, acting like Danton on the motto "L'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace," sighs after *Henri Quatre et Gabrièlle.* There is more of the spirit of the French Revolution in *Don Juan* than in all the works of the author's contemporaries; but his criticism is that of Boileau, and when deliberate is generally absurd. He never recognized the meaning of the artistic movement of his age, and overvalued those of his works which the Unities helped to destroy. He hailed Gifford as his Magnus Apollo, and put Rogers next to Scott in his comical pyramid. "Chaucer," he writes, "I think obscene and contemptible." He could see no merit in Spenser, preferred Tasso to Milton, and called the old English dramatists "mad and turbid mountebanks." In the same spirit he writes: "In the time of Pope it was all Horace; now it is all Claudian." He saw—what fanatics had begun to deny—that Pope was a great writer, and the "angel of reasonableness," the strong common sense of both, was a link between them; but the expressions he uses during his controversy with Bowles look like jests, till we are convinced of his earnestness by his anger. "Neither time, nor distance, nor grief, nor age can

ever diminish my veneration for him who is the great moral poet of all times, of all climes, of all feelings, and of all stages of existence. . . . Your whole generation are not worth a canto of the *Dunciad*, or anything that is his." All the while he was himself writing prose and verse, in grasp, if not in vigour as far beyond the stretch of Pope, as Pope is in "worth and wit and sense" removed above his mimics. The point of the paradox is not merely that he deserted, but that he sometimes imitated his model, and when he did so, failed. Macaulay's judgment, that "personal taste led him to the eighteenth century, thirst for praise to the nineteenth," is quite at fault. There can be no doubt that Byron loved praise as much as he affected to despise it. His note, on reading the *Quarterly* on his dramas, "I am the most unpopular man in England," is like the cry of a child under chastisement; but he had little affinity, moral or artistic, with the spirit of our so-called Augustans, and his determination to admire them was itself rebellious. Again we are reminded of his phrase, "I am of the opposition." His vanity and pride were perpetually struggling for the mastery, and though he thirsted for popularity he was bent on compelling it; so he warred with the literary impulse of which he was the child.

Byron has no relation to the master-minds whose works reflect a nation or an era, and who keep their own secrets. His verse and prose is alike biographical, and the inequalities of his style are those of his career. (He lived in a glass case, and could not hide himself by his habit of burning blue lights.) He was too great to do violence to his nature, which was not great enough to be really consistent. It was thus natural for him to pose as the spokesman of two ages—as a critic and as an author; and of

two orders of society—as a peer, and as a poet of revolt. Sincere in both, he could never forget the one character in the other. To the last he was an aristocrat in sentiment, a democrat in opinion. "Vulgarity," he writes, with a pithy half-truth, "is far worse than downright blackguardism; for the latter comprehends wit, humour, and strong sense at times, while the former is a sad abortive attempt at all things, signifying nothing." He could never reconcile himself to the English radicals; and it has been acutely remarked that part of his final interest in Greece lay in the fact that he found it a country of classic memories, "where a man might be the champion of liberty without soiling himself in the arena." He owed much of his early influence to the fact of his moving in the circles of rank and fashion; but though himself steeped in the prejudices of caste, he struck at them at times with fatal force. Aristocracy is the individual asserting a vital distinction between itself and "the muck o' the world." Byron's heroes all rebel against the associative tendency of the nineteenth century; they are self-worshippers at war with society; but most of them come to bad ends. He maligned himself in those caricatures, and has given more of himself in describing one whom with special significance we call a brother poet. "Allen," he writes in 1813, "has lent me a quantity of Burns's unpublished letters. . . . What an antithetical mind!—tenderness, roughness—delicacy, coarseness—sentiment, sensuality—soaring and grovelling—dirt and deity—all mixed up in that one compound of inspired clay!" We have only to add to these antitheses, in applying them with slight modification to the writer. Byron had, on occasion, more self-control than Burns, who yielded to every thirst or gust, and could never have lived the life of the soldier at Meso-

longhi; but, partly owing to meanness, partly to a sound instinct, his memory has been more severely dealt with. The fact of his being a nobleman helped to make him famous, but it also helped to make him hated. No doubt it half spoiled him in making him a show; and the circumstance has suggested the remark of a humourist, that it is as hard for a lord to be a perfect gentleman as for a camel to pass through the needle's eye. But it also exposed to the rancours of jealousy a man who had nearly everything but domestic happiness to excite that most corroding of literary passions; and when he got out of gear he became the quarry of Spenser's "blatant beast." On the other hand, Burns was, beneath his disgust at Holy Fairs and Willies, sincerely reverential; much of *Don Juan* would have seemed to him "an atheist's laugh," and —a more certain superiority—he was absolutely frank.

Byron, like Pope, was given to playing monkey-like tricks, mostly harmless, but offensive to their victims. His peace of mind was dependent on what people would say of him, to a degree unusual even in the irritable race; and when they spoke ill he was, again like Pope, essentially vindictive. The *Bards and Reviewers* beats about, where the lines to Atticus transfix with Philoctetes' arrows; but they are due to a like impulse. Byron affected to contemn the world; but, say what he would, he cared too much for it. He had a genuine love of solitude as an alterative; but he could not subsist without society, and, Shelley tells us, wherever he went, became the nucleus of it. He sprang up again when flung to the earth, but he never attained to the disdain he desired.

We find him at once munificent and careful about money; calmly asleep amid a crowd of trembling sailors, yet never going to ride without a nervous caution; defying

augury, yet seriously disturbed by a gipsy's prattle. He could be the most genial of comrades, the most considerate of masters, and he secured the devotion of his servants, as of his friends; but he was too overbearing to form many equal friendships, and apt to be ungenerous to his real rivals. His shifting attitude towards Lady Byron, his wavering purposes, his impulsive acts, are a part of the character we trace through all his life and work — a strange mixture of magnanimity and brutality, of laughter and tears, consistent in nothing but his passion and his pride, yet redeeming all his defects by his graces, and wearing a greatness that his errors can only half obscure.

Alternately the idol and the horror of his contemporaries, Byron was, during his life, feared and respected as "the grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme." His works were the events of the literary world. The chief among them were translated into French, German, Italian, Danish, Polish, Russian, Spanish. On the publication of Moore's *Life*, Lord Macaulay had no hesitation in referring to Byron as "the most celebrated Englishman of the nineteenth century." Nor have we now; but in the interval between 1840–1870 it was the fashion to talk of him as a sentimentalist, a romancer, a shallow wit, a nine days' wonder, a poet for "green unknowing youth." It was a reaction such as leads us to disestablish the heroes of our crude imaginations till we learn that to admire nothing is as sure a sign of immaturity as to admire everything.

The weariness, if not disgust, induced by a throng of more than usually absurd imitators, enabled Mr. Carlyle, the poet's successor in literary influence, more effectively to lead the counter-revolt. "In my mind," writes this critic, in 1839, "Byron has been sinking at an accelerated

rate for the last ten years, and has now reached a very low level. . . . His fame has been very great, but I do not see how it is to endure; neither does that make him great. No genuine productive thought was ever revealed by him to mankind. He taught me nothing that I had not again to forget." The refrain of Carlyle's advice during the most active years of his criticism was, "Close thy Byron, open thy Goethe." We do so, and find that the refrain of Goethe's advice in reference to Byron is — "Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ." He urged Eckermann to study English that he might read him; remarking, "A character of such eminence has never existed before, and probably will never come again. The beauty of *Cain* is such as we shall not see a second time in the world. . . . Byron issues from the sea-waves ever fresh. I did right to present him with that monument of love in *Helena*. I could not make use of any man as the representative of the modern poetic era except him, who is undoubtedly to be regarded as the greatest genius of our century." Again: "Tasso's epic has maintained its fame, but Byron is the burning bush which reduces the cedar of Lebanon to ashes. . . . The English may think of him as they please; this is certain, they can show no (living) poet who is to be compared to him. . . . But he is too worldly. Contrast *Macbeth* and *Beppo*, where you are in a nefarious empirical world. On Eckermann's doubting "whether there is a gain for pure culture in Byron's work," Goethe conclusively replies, "There I must contradict you. The audacity and grandeur of Byron must certainly tend towards culture. We should take care not to be always looking for it in the decidedly pure and moral. Everything that is great promotes cultivation, as soon as we are aware of it."

This verdict of the Olympian as against the verdict of

the Titan is interesting in itself, and as being the verdict of the whole continental world of letters. "What," exclaims Castelar, "does Spain not owe to Byron? From his mouth come our hopes and fears. He has baptized us with his blood. There is no one with whose being some song of his is not woven. His life is like a funeral torch over our graves." Mazzini takes up the same tune for Italy. Stendhal speaks of Byron's "Apollonic power;" and Sainte Beuve writes to the same intent, with some judicious caveats. M. Taine concludes his survey of the romantic movement with the remark: "In this splendid effort, the greatest are exhausted. One alone — Byron — attains the summit. He is so great and so English, that from him alone we shall learn more truths of his country and his age than from all the rest together." Dr. Elze ranks the author of *Harold* and *Juan* among the four greatest English poets, and claims for him the intellectual parentage of Lamartine and Musset in France, of Espronceda in Spain, of Puschkin in Russia, with some modifications, of Heine in Germany, of Berchet and others in Italy. So many voices of so various countries cannot be simply set aside: unless we wrap ourselves in an insolent insularism, we are bound at least to ask what is the meaning of their concurrent testimony. Foreign judgments can manifestly have little weight on matters of form, and not one of the above-mentioned critics is sufficiently alive to the egregious shortcomings which Byron himself recognized. That he loses almost nothing by translation is a compliment to the man, a disparagement to the artist. Scarce a page of his verse even aspires to perfection; hardly a stanza will bear the minute word-by-word dissection which only brings into clearer view the delicate touches of Keats or Tennyson; his pictures with a big brush were

never meant for the microscope. Here the contrast between his theoretic worship of his idol and his own practice reaches a climax. If, as he professed to believe, "the best poet is he who best executes his work," then he is hardly a poet at all. He is habitually rapid and slovenly; an improvisatore on the spot where his fancy is kindled, writing *currente calamo*, and disdaining the "art to blot." "I can never recast anything. I am like the tiger; if I miss the first spring, I go grumbling back to my jungle." He said to Medwin, "Blank verse is the most difficult, because every line must be good." Consequently, his own blank verse is always defective—sometimes execrable. No one else—except, perhaps, Wordsworth—who could write so well, could also write so ill. This fact in Byron's case seems due not to mere carelessness, but to incapacity. Something seems to stand behind him, like the slave in the chariot, to check the current of his highest thought. The glow of his fancy fades with the suddenness of a southern sunset. His best inspirations are spoilt by the interruption of incongruous commonplace. He had none of the guardian delicacy of taste, or the thirst after completeness, which mark the consummate artist. He is more nearly a dwarf Shakspeare than a giant Pope. This defect was most mischievous where he was weakest, in his dramas and his lyrics, least so where he was strongest, in his mature satires. It is almost transmuted into an excellence in the greatest of these, which is by design and in detail a temple of incongruity.

If we turn from his manner to his matter, we cannot claim for Byron any absolute originality. His sources have been found in Rousseau, Voltaire, Chateaubriand, Beaumarchais, Lauzun, Gibbon, Bayle, St. Pierre, Alfieri, Casti, Cuvier, La Bruyere, Wieland, Swift, Sterne, Le Sage, Goe-

the, scraps of the classics, and the Book of Job. Absolute originality in a late age is only possible to the hermit, the lunatic, or the sensation novelist. Byron, like the rovers before Minos, was not ashamed of his piracy. He transferred the random prose of his own letters and journals to his dramas, and with the same complacency made use of the notes jotted down from other writers as he sailed on the Lake of Geneva. But he made them his own by re-casting the rough ore into bell-metal. He brewed a cauldron like that of Macbeth's witches, and from it arose the images of crowned kings. If he did not bring a new idea into the world, he quadrupled the force of existing ideas and scattered them far and wide. Southern critics have maintained that he had a southern nature, and was in his true element on the Lido or under an Andalusian night. Others dwell on the English pride that went along with his Italian habits and Greek sympathies. The truth is, he had the power of making himself poetically everywhere at home; and this, along with the fact of all his writings being perfectly intelligible, is the secret of his European influence. He was a citizen of the world; because he not only painted the environs, but reflected the passions and aspirations of every scene amid which he dwelt.

A disparaging critic has said, "Byron is nothing without his descriptions." The remark only emphasizes the fact that his genius was not dramatic. All non-dramatic art is concerned with bringing before us pictures of the world, the value of which lies half in their truth, half in the amount of human interest with which they are invested. To scientific accuracy few poets can lay claim, and Byron less than most; but the general truth of his descriptions is acknowledged by all who have travelled in

the same countries. The Greek verses of his first pilgrimage—*e. g.*, the night scene on the Gulf of Arta, many of the Albanian sketches, with much of the *Siege of Corinth* and the *Giaour*—have been invariably commended for their vivid realism. Attention has been especially directed to the lines in the *Corsair* beginning—

> "But, lo! from high Hymettus to the plain,"

as being the veritable voice of one

> "Spell-bound, within the clustering Cyclades."

The opening lines of the same canto, transplanted from the *Curse of Minerva*, are even more suggestive:—

> "Slow sinks, more lovely ere his race be run,
> Along Morea's hill the setting sun,
> Not, as in northern climes, obscurely bright,
> But one unclouded blaze of living light," &c.

In the same way, the later cantos of *Harold* are steeped in Switzerland and in Italy. Byron's genius, it is true, required a stimulus; it could not have revelled among the daisies of Chaucer, or pastured by the banks of the Doon or the Ouse, or thriven among the Lincolnshire fens. He had a sincere, if somewhat exclusive, delight in the storms and crags that seemed to respond to his nature and to his age. There is no affectation in the expression of the wish, "O that the desert were my dwelling-place!" though we know that the writer on the shores of the Mediterranean still craved for the gossip of the clubs. It only shows that—

> "Two desires toss about
> The poet's feverish blood;
> One drives him to the world without,
> And one to solitude."

Of Byron's two contemporary rivals, Wordsworth had

no feverish blood; nothing drove him to the world without; consequently his "eyes avert their ken from half of human fate," and his influence, though perennial, will always be limited. He conquered England from his hills and lakes; but his spirit has never crossed the Straits which he thought too narrow. The other, with a fever in his veins, calmed it in the sea and in the cloud, and, in some degree because of his very excellencies, has failed as yet to mark the world at large. The poets' poet, the cynosure of enthusiasts, he bore the banner of the forlorn hope; but Byron, with his feet of clay, led the ranks. Shelley, as pure a philanthropist as St. Francis or Howard, could forget mankind, and, like his Adonaïs, become one with nature. Byron, who professed to hate his fellows, was of them even more than for them, and so appealed to them through a broader sympathy, and held them with a firmer hand. By virtue of his passion, as well as his power, he was enabled to represent the human tragedy in which he played so many parts, and to which his external universe of cloudless moons, and vales of evergreen, and lightning-riven peaks, are but the various background. He set the "anguish, doubt, desire," the whole chaos of his age, to a music whose thunder-roll seems to have inspired the opera of *Lohengrin*—a music not designed to teach or to satisfy "the budge doctors of the Stoic fur," but which will continue to arouse and delight the sons and daughters of men.

Madame de Staël said to Byron, at Ouchy, "It does not do to war with the world: the world is too strong for the individual." Goethe only gives a more philosophic form to this counsel when he remarks of the poet, "He put himself into a false position by his assaults on Church and State. His discontent ends in negation. . . . If I call *bad* bad,

what do I gain? But if I call *good* bad, I do mischief." The answer is obvious: as long as men call *bad* good, there is a call for iconoclasts: half the reforms of the world have begun in negation. Such comments also point to the common error of trying to make men other than they are by lecturing them. This scion of a long line of lawless bloods—a Scandinavian Berserker, if there ever was one—the literary heir of the Eddas—was specially created to wage that war—to smite the conventionality which is the tyrant of England with the hammer of Thor, and to sear with the sarcasm of Mephistopheles the hollow hypocrisy—sham taste, sham morals, sham religion—of the society by which he was surrounded and infected, and which all but succeeded in seducing him. But for the ethereal essence—

> "The fount of fiery life
> Which served for that Titanic strife,"

Byron would have been merely a more melodious Moore and a more accomplished Brummell. But the caged lion was only half tamed, and his continual growls were his redemption. His restlessness was the sign of a yet unbroken will. He fell and rose, and fell again; but never gave up the struggle that keeps alive, if it does not save, the soul. His greatness, as well as his weakness, lay in the fact that from boyhood battle was the breath of his being. To tell him not to fight was like telling Wordsworth not to reflect, or Shelley not to sing. His instrument is a trumpet of challenge; and he lived, as he appropriately died, in the progress of an unaccomplished campaign. His work is neither perfect architecture nor fine mosaic; but, like that of his intellectual ancestors, the elder Elizabethans whom he perversely maligned, it is all animated by the spirit of action and of enterprise.

In good portraits his head has a lurid look, as if it had been at a higher temperature than that of other men. That high temperature was the source of his inspiration, and the secret of a spell which, during his life, commanded homage and drew forth love. Mere artists are often manikins. Byron's brilliant, though unequal genius was subordinate to the power of his personality; he

> "Had the elements
> So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world—'This was a man.'"

We may learn much from him still, when we have ceased to disparage, as our fathers ceased to idolize, a name in which there is so much warning and so much example.

THE END.

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